"THE CRIME OF THE BLACK THIRTEEN," BY GERALD CARLTON, NEXT WEEK

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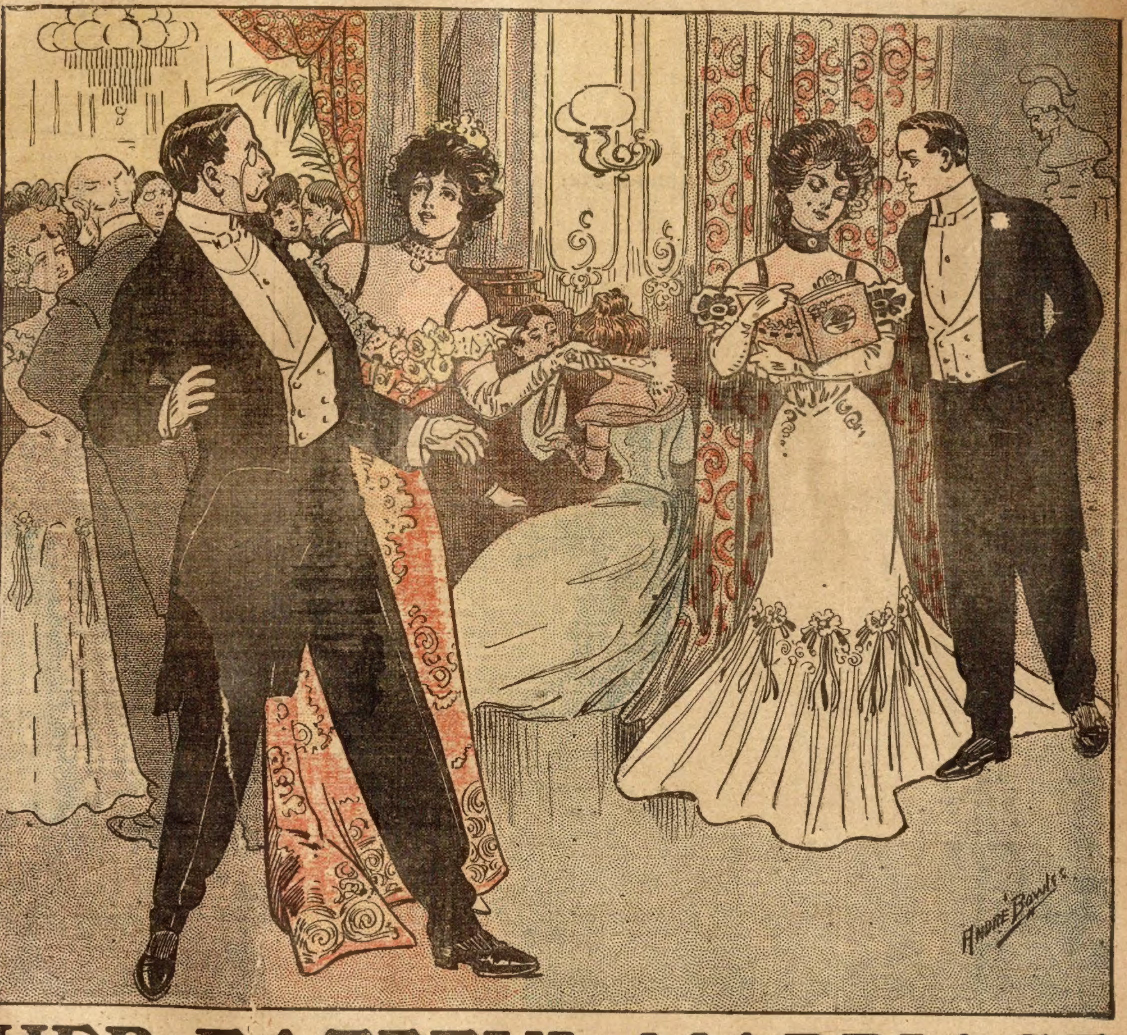

HER FATEFUL MARRIAGE

By Annie Brownlee

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CHAPTER I.

THE BRIDAL MORN.

A delicious gleam of sunshine streams through the curtained window, dances for a moment over the dainty arrangements of the elegant little toilet table, loses itself among the exquisite laces, linens and embroideries strewn about, then finally wanders to a fair girlish head half hidden among the pillows, and plays over the closed eyelids of the almost childish face.

The inquisitive little sunbeam has done its work, and timidly retreats. Two white arms are suddenly thrown up, then lie gracefully curled about the girl's head. The eyes are wide-open now, and hastily survey the pretty room, and wander to the dainty garments scattered about, then to the brilliant sunshine pouring through the window, and then, with a sudden start of remembrance to the little china clock on the mantel opposite.

"My wedding day!" she murmurs softly, but the eyes don't brighten, nor the cheeks glow. "Only a few hours more and I will be Grace Langdon no longer! A few hours and the old life and the things of it will have passed forever. My wedding day! The day I have lived through in imagination a thousand times. How different I once imagined it would be! How different I should feel had it been——Oh, Mark! Mark! what a sweet, far away dream that was! I suppose you have ceased to remember it. I would to God that I could forget so easily! A boy-and-girl fancy, my mother called it. Well, perhaps she was right. It is long enough since he has thought of me now. So it really is my wedding day! I wonder if all the girls feel as I do today! One consolation, I will be rid of mamma's nagging. I'll hear no more about tiresome bills and creditors. I do wish Sir Richard was not so impetuous, that he did not love me in quite such a fierce, wild fashion. I seem to have been quite carried away by the vehemence of his love, and mother's constant persuasions. After all, I suppose one must marry sometime. If it were only——"

The sentence is never finished. With a sigh she jumps out of bed and brushes the luxuriant hair from her brows with an impatient gesture.

NEW YEAR'S BELLS

Ring from your towers old and gray!
Ring, ring, ring! with a mighty sway,
Old, old bells! With voices free,
Chime the march to victory.-
Ring! The iron casket of the past is sealed;
Ring! Grave sins and errors all are there concealed;
Ring! The morning gleams. The conquering hosts draw near
To hail the dawning of the Glad New Year.

Ring from your towers heavenward sent!
Ring, ring, ring! with firm intent,
Truth and Love—Love and Right!
Ring! The nation's stars grow bright!
Ring! The bravest men shall fill the halls of state;
Ring! Dishonesty has reached the gorge of fate;
Ring! The stars and stripes shall wave a nation's cheer
While worth hangs trophies in the Glad New Year.

"It is no use trying to deceive myself. In a few hours I will be Sir Richard's wife, and the thought is more bitter than wormwood. I hate to think of the way I have been dragged into this marriage. How oddly one does drift into things! And to think, that I, Grace Langdon, should have bartered my freedom for—well for what? Unencumbered estates, magnificent rent-roll, luxurious mansions, ancient family—oh fudge! how sickening it all is! After all, what are these things?"

She is standing before the mirror in a loose white dressing gown, her rich hair hanging loosely about her, when the door softly opens and a lady enters.

It is a strikingly handsome and stately lady that enters, with a sufficient likeness to the girl to suggest relationship.

"Up and dressed so soon, darling?" she says in sweet silvery tones. "You look very well, dear; just pale enough to be suitable for a bride." Then she kisses the pale little face, and the girl submits to the parental caress with passive indifference.

The girl is tall and graceful, with delicate features, and lovely golden hair, and a skin creamy and soft, with exquisite tints on cheeks and lips.

Two hours later Grace Langdon stands dressed for the altar. The maid is giving the last touches to her toilet. There is a low knock on the door and a maid enters with an envelope and hands it to the bride.

"What! a telegram for me, Jane!" Wonderingly she tears it open. A minute later and her face rivals her gown in whiteness, the paper slips from her nerveless fingers and drops to the floor.

With an exclamation of astonishment and alarm Mrs. Langdon is by her side. The maids are hastily dismissed.

"What is it, dear? What has alarmed and agitated you so?"

"Mamma, must I marry Sir Richard?" she asked wildly. "Would he not give me my freedom if I begged him—even now?"

"Grace Langdon! are you mad?" the mother cried, her face blanching with a sudden fear. "Go back at the last moment with everything prepared and the guests invited! You must be a perfect idiot to ever think of such a thing!"

"You are right, mamma. I did not think I was such a fool till this minute. I see it all now." The girl's face was a ghastly pallor, her voice intensely bitter.

She stoops and picks up the bit of yellow paper that has given the world a different aspect in the last few minutes. With an angry exclamation Mrs. Langdon snatches it from her.

"I suppose this has something to do with your insane words a moment ago." Then she read aloud:

"'Dearest Grace:—Will be with you by one o'clock. You see, I have kept my word, made my pile, and am coming to claim you. MARK.'

"The impertinent young fool! As though that could ever be. You have made a much better match, my dear. You will be Lady Neville, of Neville's Court, with one of the finest rent rolls in England. I have spared no trouble or means to secure you a brilliant future, my dear. Mark Eldon, indeed! I could not think of such a thing. Forget him, child. He was always a graceless young scamp."

"But, mamma, I once loved him so much," she said entreatingly. "I would give ten years of my life to be free when he returns. Cannot—cannot something be done?"

"Yes, certainly, something will be done. In less than an hour you will be Sir Richard's wife. I can trust him to manage your whims and fancies in the future. You always were so ungrateful. You should be thanking me for the brilliant future I have secured for you, rather than worrying me about that young idiot, Mark. Now, just glance in the mirror and see how beautiful you look, and—"

"Reflect on the excellent price those looks are bringing me," interrupted Grace sarcastically. "Mamma, I must say it this once, I am ashamed of my position today, and of my share in the heartless barter."

"Barter! What makes you use such absurd words!" exclaims her mother indignantly. "After all I have done for you—after all my sacrifices, you speak thus! I am glad you go to Sir Richard today. You would break my heart did I have to listen to your absurd whims much longer."

"Oh, mamma!" the girl cried, her face growing very white. "Don't let us quarrel today! But your sacrifices, as you call them, would look very small and meager compared with this of mine today. But it don't matter, now. I suppose you are right. It is too late to retract my word."

"The carriage is waiting," the maid cries, entering the room.

Without a word Grace Langdon sits down before the mirror and allows the filmy lace veil to be fastened upon the beautiful golden head. Like a transparent cloud it floats over her and envelopes the dainty figure in its misty folds.

She looks so exquisitely lovely that both mother and maid hold their breath for a moment, then they vent their delight in rhapsodies of admiration. The girl scarcely glances at her reflection in the mirror. She knows she is beautiful; she has been told it a thousand times during the last three years, but today she cares nothing about that beauty. Her heart is heavy with a sad foreboding for the future, and her peace is gone forever.

"One moment, mamma," she says, as Mrs. Langdon is about to hurry her from the room. "You may go, Jane."

The maid retires, and Grace with a white, anguished face lays her hand on her mother's arm.

"Mother, have pity, say I may escape this terrible ordeal, even yet. Send Sir Richard word I am ill—crazy—anything you like, only stop the wedding—I beg of you!"

"Good heavens! girl, you will drive me crazy! I would to God Mark Eldon had been caught by the redskins or whatever they call them, in that heathenish Canada, before coming back to worry me so. Come, don't stand there like a statue. Sir Richard will be waiting, and the carriage has been at the door this half hour. Now, for heaven's sake, don't make a scene in church or do anything ridiculous."

"Very well, mamma, I promise not to disgrace you today. I will marry Sir Richard according to schedule, but remember, whatever the future may bring, this marriage was forced upon me."

"You darling girl! I knew your good sense would prevail."

She was about to kiss her when Grace drew back coldly.

"Thank you for the kindness intended, mamma, but I would rather you did not kiss me just now."

"You eccentric, absurd child! I never could make you out!" But the girl's refusal had hurt her deeply.

"Yes, I know, mamma, I don't expect we ever will understand each other," was the bitter reply. Her face was cold and set, and in her eyes was an unfathomable depth of misery and pain.

A few minutes later, a white radiant figure descends the richly carpeted stairs to the carriage waiting at the door.

Unconscious of the admiring comments, heedless of the multitude of eager spectators, Grace Langdon is driven to the fashionable church where Sir Richard Neville impatiently awaits her coming. A more sad, unwilling bride was never sacrificed to the exigencies of society and the god of mammon.

About a half hour after the bridal party drives away, a tall young fellow runs lightly up the steps of Mrs. Langdon's elegant home. For a moment he wonders at the unusual stir and bustle about the place.

"Hello, Thomas, what's up today?" he says, addressing the old footman.

"Master Mark! Well, I am mighty glad to see you, sir! But why didn't you come sooner?" and a gleam of genuine pity shone in the old man's eyes.

"Couldn't get here a moment before. But you haven't told me what's up this morning? Is Mrs. Langdon entertaining today?"

He observed the pity in the old man's eyes and wondered at it.

"Come into the parlor, sir. Mrs. Langdon and Miss Grace will soon be back," the old man said.

"See, here, Thomas, what does all this mean? Where is Grace?" He felt instinctively that something was wrong.

"Mark, my lad," the old man began, "this is her wedding day." He laid one trembling old hand on the other's arm, as though to assure him of his sympathy.

"Her wedding day!" he cries stupidly.

Then he begins to comprehend. His face pales, and a terrible gleam comes into his dark eyes.

"God in Heaven!" he cries agitatedly. "Grace married! Grace Langdon, whom I have idolized all these years, to be the wife of another man! Was it for this I toiled and fought and wrestled from the earth a fortune that I might return and make her happy? Oh, Grace! Grace! Could you not have waited a little longer? And you vowed you would be true to me! Oh God!" he cried in deepest anguish. "What will I do with my life now?"

Thomas turned away that he might not see the tears in his eyes.

There is a stir and the sound of voices. Mark Eldon hears it and understands.

"They are returning. I must not let them find me here!"

In desperation he clutches his hat and strides rapidly down the hall. On the very threshold he meets the bridal party.

"Why Mr. Eldon, how pleased we are to see you!" Mrs. Langdon says sweetly. "So kind and thoughtful of you to come straight here!" Though she speaks calmly enough, she has grown very pale.

"Very pleased, I am sure, Mrs. Langdon." There is cutting sarcasm in his voice and manner as he utterly ignores the proffered hand. "You will excuse me for having made the mistake of coming here this morning?"

He is about to pass on, when there is the rustle of silken skirts by his side, a sweet, delicate perfume greets his nostrils, and a soft, clinging hand is laid upon his arm, and before him stands the loveliest vision of womanhood he has ever beheld. It is the girl who has filled his thoughts by day and his dreams by night, and he meets her thus, the bride of another!

For one moment he gazes silently at the lovely face. All his anger melts away, and his eyes speak unutterable sadness and reproach.

CHAPTER II.

TO MEET AGAIN WHEN MEETING IS BUT PAIN.

"Oh, Grace! how could you," he whispered reproachfully. "You knew I was rich and was coming home. Could you not have waited a little longer?"

"Oh, Mark, I heard no word from you and I thought you had forgotten till your message came this morning," she faltered.

"Forgotten! You believed me to be as inconstant and faithless as yourself," he sneered. "I told you I should never forget you while I lived."

"Why did not you write me a line then, some word of assurance that you had not forgotten?" she asked reproachfully.

"You know why. Your mother forbade it," he says in a choking voice. "But I informed her of my success and of my intentions of returning to England to claim you. Did she not tell you of that?"

"No," she answers very soberly. "I had no idea she ever heard from you."

For a moment he looked at her as though dazed. Then a muttered imprecation falls from his lips, and without one word of farewell he leaves her.

Sir Richard could not hear the conversation between his bride and Mark Eldon, but he was keenly watching the pair.

When Mark leaves her so abruptly, Grace stands like one dazed, but Mrs. Langdon has been hovering near and is equal to the occasion.

"Grace, my dear, is not Mr. Eldon fearfully changed? Quite the American or Canadian, or whatever they call them over there. So changed—so fast and vulgar, and such bad form, and all that. He will be just like cousin Charlie's wife, and really those aborigines are quite too dreadful. I am thankful he did not remain. It would have been dreadful to have him here."

Grace looked at her steadily for a moment.

"You are right," she said in a strange, hollow voice. "It would have been dreadful."

Mrs. Langdon feels nervous and uncomfortable, as she meets that steady gaze. But in her mind she keeps repeating:

"How thankful I am it is successfully over. So fortunate he did not arrive a day sooner."

She actually shudders as she thinks how nearly the costly cup had slipped from her grasp. "But all is safe now," she thinks, and congratulates herself for the hundredth time.

Mrs. Langdon's elegant parlors are crowded with distinguished guests, all anxiously waiting to shower congratulations upon the bride and groom. Mrs. Langdon, in the flush of victory, flutters in and out among her guests in graceful agitation, and feels that she has accomplished a most worthy object. In her inmost heart she thinks society should rise up and call her blessed.

The crisis has been past, there will be no further danger to fear. As she looks at her daughter's face a strange, uncomfortable feeling steals into her heart. There is something so indescribable, something so dead-looking, about the beautiful young bride.

"But, thank goodness, she is safely and wisely married; all danger on that point is past." But is it really past?

It is the last week in March; the air is cold and bleak, but in the drawing room of an elegant house in fashionable Mayfair all is warmth and comfort.

A silver tea urn stands hissing on the table by the fire, dainty cups stand invitingly beside it. The fragrant odor of tea fills the air. All is bright, warm and pleasant, and the silvery voices of women fill the air.

"So the Nevilles are really coming to town next week?" asks a pretty brunette, setting down her cup and turning to her hostess, a fine, imposing looking woman, gowned in the height of fashion.

"So Mr. Eldon writes me from New York," her hostess replies. "He expects to arrive in England about the same time himself."

The hostess is no other than that horrid American, "cousin Charlie's wife."

"Let me see, Lady Neville. Why, she was the pretty Miss Langdon, was she not?" a woman who had been absent from England for sometime asked.

"Yes, Grace Langdon, who caused such a furor in society three or four years ago. A most charming and delightful girl."

"The Nevilles are relations of yours, are they not, Mrs. Duncan?" another asked.

"Well, yes, I suppose they are. Grace and my husband are cousins, or something of that sort. That's how they came to dub me 'cousin Charlie's wife.' You just ought to see Grace—that's Lady Neville—with that baby of hers. She's just that fond of it! As a rule society mothers nowadays don't bother about their babies, but Grace—she's not that sort. She is just wrapped up in her boy."

Two or three fashionable mothers present winced at the unvarnished little home thrust, and exchanged significant glances that said plainly: "What a fearfully vulgar creature. Were she not so amazingly rich it would be quite impossible to know her."

"Lady Neville and Mr. Eldon are very old friends, are they not?" asked another.

"Oh, very," answered "cousin Charlie's wife. "They played together since they were little tots."

"How very delightful! Such a charming friendship!" simpers a model of fashion, who looks as though just out of the latest fashion plate.

"That sort of friendship is so delightful, so proper, and no one can say anything," another chimes in.

"But this Mr. Eldon, he's very wealthy, is he not?"

"Oh, yes; a couple of million, I believe. Made his wealth out of silver mines. He went prospecting in New Ontario, and discovered a fabulously rich mine in the vicinity of Cobalt," Mrs. Duncan explained.

"He ought to marry," suggested a portly matron, who had two marriageable daughters out, and a third that should be.

"Marry! I don't think Mark Eldon will be in a hurry to do that," and cousin Charlie's wife laughed softly to herself. "He's young, and I fancy he won't give up his freedom for some years to come." She enjoyed tormenting those match-making mamas.

"Perhaps his old playmate, Lady Neville, would object to his marrying?" suggests the matron with the marriageable daughters. There is more acidity than sweetness in her well-modulated voice.

Cousin Charlie's wife puts down her teacup, very slowly and thoughtfully, and looks straight at the speaker.

"I think I know what you mean," she remarks coldly. "But in our country people say right out what they mean. They don't go round the corners there. They take the short cut every time. Lady Neville is a good wife, and a most devoted mother. She would only be too glad to see her old playfellow happily married. The real trouble is, Mark has a healthy horror of the girl that would marry him for his money. Before he jumps into matrimony he'll have to be mighty sure it's himself and not his dollars she's in love with."

There was an awkward silence among the fair gossipers, but all were mentally agreed that those Americans have a most unpleasant way of putting things.

"So Mr. Eldon returns next week?" the portly matron went on. "How very charming! He has shunned society so long, it will be quite delightful to have him with us again."

"I quite agree with you," observed cousin Charlie's wife, softly. "A friend of mine expects to sail by the same boat, and Mr. Eldon has kindly volunteered to take care of Theresa on the way over."

"A lady?" several asked in the same breath.

"Yes, a charming girl, and so pretty—quite too pretty to travel alone."

Consternation at once fills the heart of the match-making mamma. What an abominable woman! What a horrible creature! If she were only less wealthy how she would delight to crush her beneath the heel of her aristocratic scorn and contempt! But in consideration of the brilliant dinners and balls given by the wealthy American, their indignation is smothered, the frowns dispelled, and only the sweetest of smiles play about lips that are absolutely trembling with envy and disgust.

The rooms are rapidly growing empty. The last guest has gone, and cousin Charlie's wife leans back in her chair and laughs softly to herself.

"I guess I riled some of them that time. How they do hate me for telling them the truth. What a time poor Mark will have dodging them! I'll just help him out a bit, and see that they don't make his life miserable."

Again that pleasant, cheery laugh rang out clear and true, for with all her peculiarities cousin Charlie's wife was a true-hearted, genuine woman.

As she sits there musing a masculine whistle reaches her ears from the rooms below.

"It's Charlie," she says, with brightening face. "I must give him a cup of tea."

A moment later a tall, ruddy-faced man enters the room.

"Hello, Catherine!" he cries in a cheery voice. "Had a lively time of it, I suppose?" glancing with a smile at the delicate china scattered about the room. "No blood spilled I hope."

"Well, we did have a real spry time. Nothing alarming you know, just the usual passage at arms."

"I see," and he leans back and laughs good-naturedly. "Did you manage to shock them worse than usual?"

"I managed to rile them somewhat. You see, they're keen on Mark's scent since they have heard he is coming home next week. I'll wager a sixpence that every one of them has two or three wives picked out for him. I just kind of upset their calculations by hinting that he would have none of them," and, again she laughs that low, pleasant laugh.

"Catherine, you're a brick! But you do shock their aristocratic ideas dreadfully."

"I suppose I do, but I can't help it. I just like to take a rise out of these husband-hunting women. They'll be after Mark like flies after molasses. They are nice enough, too, and I like the majority of them, yet I can't help tormenting them a bit now and then, and I really do pity Mark."

At this they both laugh, the hearty, wholesome laugh of the American, free from the insincerity and false ring of the laugh of select modern society.

CHAPTER III.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING AFTER ALL?

In a magnificent mansion in Park Lane a woman stands before a toilet table adding the last touches to an exquisite toilet.

The face is beautiful, the toilet a lovely creation, and a fortune in diamonds glitter and sparkle about her, but there is no happiness in the lovely blue eyes that gaze so sadly at their own reflection, but a great sadness has settled over the white brow, and around the tender young lips.

It is Grace—Lady Neville.

There is a light tap on the door. "Come in," Lady Neville says in her sweet, silvery voice, the one thing about her that has not changed.

"If you please, my lady, Sir Richard wishes me to say he can't keep the horses waiting in the cold any longer," a maid said.

"I will be down at once," Grace answered. She slowly dons her cloak and hat and crosses the richly carpeted corridor to a room beyond. The room she enters is dimly lighted, and is furnished in pure white. At one end of the room stands a little cot, its spotless draperies looped back with the palest of pink ribbons.

"How is baby tonight, Esther?" she asks the nurse in a low subdued voice, for baby is sleeping.

"His cold don't seem very much better, and he is somewhat feverish, but I don't think there is any cause for alarm. Babies do have turns, you know," the nurse replied, a kindly-faced, elderly woman, who had been Grace's own nurse.

The child is sleeping quietly. Soft, clinging rings of dusky hair curl about the broad white brow, the cheeks are a vivid scarlet. The little, fat, dimpled hands lie against the snowy coverlet. The mother's face grows soft and tender as she gazes at the sweet baby form. As she stoops and kisses the ruby lips her face shines with a pure and holy joy.

"Has Sir Richard been to see baby tonight?" she asks the nurse.

"Gracious sakes! Sir Richard don't trouble his head about babies! I suspect he's too busy otherwise."

Grace does not rebuke the old nurse. She feels she can forgive her much, and, besides, no harm was intended. But the careless words caused her acute pain.

With a sigh that is half a sob, she kisses the baby face once more, then softly leaves the room.

"What a dickens of a time it takes you to dress. Here you have kept me waiting almost half an hour," her husband grumbled as she joined him.

He has not once glanced at her. It is doubtful if he could have told the color of her gown. The exquisite toilet, on which she has lavished so much care and attention, is wasted on him. He had been determined to win her for his wife, and having won her he quickly wearied of his toy, and now smiles at what he calls his "absurd infatuation."

Grace, too, has greatly changed. She has lost interest in things general, has grown cold, and almost indifferent. She has youth, riches, and is much sought after and admired, but her heart is heavy, her face sad. The one great error in her life is constantly demanding compensation.

She does not rave against fate and bemoan her lot, like many women do. She cannot undo the past. She cannot live her life over again, so she strives to be contented, but, it may be feared, strives in vain.

Six months ago she met Mark Eldon for the first time since her wedding day. She was shocked and dismayed at the change wrought in him in so brief a time. The bright, sunny, genial disposition was gone, and he had grown cold, cynical and bitter. At times he was wildly extravagant, no dissipation seemed too great for him. Then a reaction would set in and he would be sullen and moody, and shun society entirely. No word of the past, no allusion to that fatal wedding morning had ever past between them. She had hoped he had forgotten, but there were times when the look in his dark eyes said "no."

If she could have had her own way, she would have staid in the quiet restfulness of the Devonshire hills, in the quaint, picturesque old grange where her child had first seen the light of day, and given herself up to the care of her boy, for the whole tenderness of her nature was lavished on the child. It alone kept the wells of kindness and sympathy from drying up.

Her husband was proud of her in a way, he was proud of her rare beauty and of her graceful, dainty manners. He felt sure she was one with whom he could trust the honor of his name, one who would never do aught to diminish the glory of his house. She would never be fast or drag his name through the mire of scandal. In short, she would always be "safe." It gratified his vanity to see her admired and hear the world applaud his choice.

The carriage rattles on through the streets of London, Grace leans back and dreamily watches the lighted windows as they whirl by.

"I wish you would try and make yourself agreeable to the Countess of Ruttlen, Grace," her husband begins abruptly. "I have fancied you treated her rather coldly. She is very popular, and when once you know her, is really a delightful woman. I should like you to be friends."

"I don't like her," Grace answers a trifle coldly. "She is loud and fast, and is not a true woman."

"Fiddlesticks! She is just jolly and full of fun. A charming woman! I mean you to see a good deal of each other."

"If you really wish it I will try and be agreeable to her. But she makes me shudder sometimes. She ridicules every high and noble feeling, and her ideals are coarse and vulgar."

"You must remember, Grace, that every one's life has not been so smooth as your own. The Countess has had a great sorrow in her life. Her marriage was a most unhappy affair."

"I have heard that she managed to get considerable pleasure out of life, just the same. Rumor says that her fastness and neglect broke her husband's heart."

"Rumor is not always correct. I'll admit, though, that we saw very little of the Count, though we enjoyed his hospitality a great deal. If he would shut himself up and mope it was not the Countess' fault. She couldn't be expected to give up society for his unreasonable whims."

"You have known the Countess a long time, have you not?" she asks carelessly.

"Yes, we knew each other as children. That's why I would like you and her to be friends," he said eagerly.

He did not add that she had once refused him because of his poverty. That was before he had come into the title and estates of a deceased uncle. Countess Kitty would take no chances, so she dismissed him and married money. Three years later he married Grace Langdon, and six months after the Count of Ruttlen had died suddenly, leaving his old sweetheart free. But his marriage had again placed a barrier between them.

The Countess of Ruttlen extends them a very gracious welcome. She is not a strikingly beautiful woman, yet, there is a certain charm about her that takes, particularly with the male sex. She is tall, well proportioned and magnificently gowned, wearing jewels fit for royalty. She is not exactly a young woman, but has managed to retain her youthful appearance, and has an army of admirers.

Lady Neville watches the vivacious, brilliant Countess with more curiosity than she has yet evinced. Sir Richard's remarks have aroused her interest and curiosity.

The Countess is gowned in a marvelous combination of crimson and gold, that suits her dark beauty wonderfully well. Grace is surprised. It never struck her before that the Countess was so beautiful.

She is alone for a minute. In one of the rooms a celebrated tenor is singing. Some one stands by her side; she looks up and meets the dark, expressive eyes of Mark Eldon. They listen together to the song. It is an Irish love song, full of pathos and pain. As the song ceases their eyes meet, and there is a world of tenderness and love in the depths of each.

"I had not heard of your arrival," Grace is saying, trying to forget that one glance. "Where are you staying?" she asks, in a voice that is a trifle unsteady.

"For the present with the Duncans. Mrs. Duncan was kind enough to ask me to stay with them till I could secure permanent apartments."

"You knew cousin Charlie's wife in America, I believe?" Her voice is growing more steady now.

"Oh, yes. I first met her in New York, just a few months prior to her marriage with Mr. Duncan. How is it I hear so many speak of her as 'cousin Charlie's wife'?"

"I don't exactly know how it was. You see, her husband is a sort of second cousin of mamma's. When she first came over, we got to speaking of her as 'cousin Charlie's wife.' I suppose strangers heard and began using the title. Was she very popular in America?"

"Yes, everybody liked Catherine Corby. She was very kind-hearted, very charitable." He paused for a moment and gazed with something very like reverence at a big fashionably dressed woman at the other end of the room. "Had it not been for 'cousin Charlie's wife', as you call her, I should, in all probabilities, still be the penniless boy I was when I sailed for the new world. It was she who advised me to go to Canada and seek my fortune in New Ontario. I owe her much for kindness received, when I was poor and alone."

Just then the Countess joined them, and further conversation on that topic was ended.

Her ladyship was in a very dignified, a very gracious, a very aristocratic mood tonight. Tonight her rooms were filled with the most exclusive of London society. The report of her reception in tomorrow's journals would include a list of the most celebrated titled personages in England. In the eyes of fashionable society Countess Kitty could be excused for feeling herself a person of much consequence.

CHAPTER IV.

TO SUFFER AND BE STILL.

Lady Neville is soon joined by a group of fashionably attired ladies and gentlemen. Mark Eldon draws a little apart, and watches the sad, little face, which, to him, is the loveliest on earth.

Meeting Grace tonight has aroused all the old passionate love for her. As he watches her tonight, surrounded by gay ladies and courtly gentlemen, he curses the fate that has been cruel enough to part them. He has grown to think of Grace as martyred to her mother's mercenary wishes. He knows she has never cared for her husband and never can. And he would have made her so happy. Had he been wise he would have shunned rather than sought her. But when are lovers really wise?

"I must see her sometimes," is the cry of his heart.

He sees Grace standing alone for a few seconds and quickly joins her.

They are examining a book of views together, but his eyes see none of their beauty. He can only look at and think of the woman whom he has loved so long and faithfully, but who is lost to him.

He is filled with a wild longing to speak of the past, to tell her of the desolation of his life since he has lost the hope of winning her. To crave her sympathy, to hear her speak words that would ease the wild restlessness of his aching heart. He tries a hundred times to speak, yet—he dare not. There is that about her which keeps all dangerous allusions in check, which chills and awes the unreasonable longing in his aching heart.

"Your wife and Mr. Eldon are most devoted to each other," the Countess remarks, as she saunters through the brilliantly lighted rooms on Sir Richard's Neville's arm.

"Oh, yes, always have been. They played together as children," he answered, carelessly glancing to where the two are sitting.

Mark is bending over Grace, his dark eyes aglow with love and tenderest passion. Lady Neville is carelessly turning the leaves, her lovely face exquisitely flushed. A smile, half tender, half sad, plays about the dainty lips.

"What a striking picture they make," the Countess continued blandly. "You should thank your lucky stars, Richard, that Mark Eldon was in America when you laid siege to my lady's heart."

"I know what you would convey," he answers, with something very like a frown, "but for once you are mistaken. There is nothing of that sort about Grace and Eldon. It is merely a continuation of their childish friendship."

Although he had ceased to love his young wife, as yet he disliked to hear her spoken of so flippantly.

The Countess Kitty laughed, and there was a tinge of sarcasm in her soft, cultivated tones.

"How delightful!" she says, in a tone in which there seems to lurk no malice. "But there are very few childish friendships that show such a marked continuation in later life. But, do you know, I have often thought what good taste you showed in choosing a wife? She is very dignified, very aristocratic, in short the perfect grande dame. She is a little too thoughtful and serious, perhaps, but that is a fault to be applauded rather than condemned."

The Countess was leaning gracefully on Sir Richard's arm, critically watching Lady Neville while speaking.

"Grace has changed much of late," the husband replied thoughtfully. "She didn't use to be so quiet and grave. She has been spending too much time in the nursery. I must see that she goes into society more."

* * * * * * * * *

It is Mrs. Langdon's day. In her splendid rooms quite a number of ladies are present, and the silvery babble of voices fill the air. The lights are perfect, and the delicious fragrance of tea and flowers fills the air.

"Will Lady Neville honor us with her presence today?" asks Mrs. Morris, a tall, fair woman, who had just dropped in to talk scandal and drink tea.

"I am not quite sure," Mrs. Langdon repiles, a trifle uneasily. "You see, this is Lady Althea's day also. Grace has changed so much since her marriage you never know what to expect of her, and she and Lady Althea are such friends, quite inseparable. She seldom remembers my day now," complainingly.

"Her ladyship is greatly changed," chimed in another. "I often remarked it and wondered what had been the cause."

"I suppose Lady Neville heard all about that little affair before—"

"Oh, there was nothing—really nothing, he told me so himself," Mrs. Langdon hastens to explain.

"Of course!" several voices chimed in. "But the Countess was dreadfully cut up about his marriage, for all that."

A little dark woman was ushered in.

"So delighted to have you drop in, Mrs. Cherry," Mrs. Landgon says, greeting her cordially.

"I have just come from Lady Althea's," the little dark woman simpers. "Oh, by the way, dear Mrs. Langdon, I met Lady Neville there. She introduced me to her friend Mr. Eldon. Her ladyship's rooms were quite too crowded. The Countess of Ruttlen was there, and, of course, Sir Richard."

"Of course!" smile the others, "they are so devoted to each other! It's fortunate Lady Neville doesn't object."

"Hardly could object, I should imagine, when she and Mark Eldon are such friends."

Mrs. Langdon feels uncomfortable, and looks it.

"Grace and Mr. Eldon!" exclaims Mrs. Langdon. "But they are such old friends, children together." She tries to appear calm and natural, but her face has gone suddenly white.

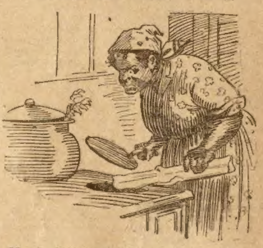
"To be sure!" chimes in a lovely creature, who has a charming friendship of her own just then. "Just like the Countess and Sir Richard, they have known each other for years and naturally have a friendly regard for each other."

Mrs. Langdon gives her a look of gratitude and relief.

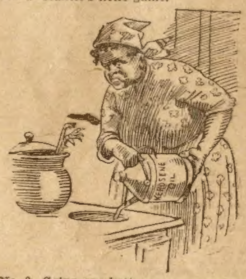
A very uncomfortable picture has risen before the worldly mother's eyes. She sees a white, anguished young face pleading for mercy, and the fiery wrath of Mark Eldon's dark eyes confront her. He is reproaching her for his ruined life, and the unhappy fate she has thrust upon her child, the martyrdom of an unloved and unloving wife. She feels nervous and agitated. "Why does Mark Eldon remain by Grace's side? Good heavens! If anything should happen! But no, nothing will happen. Grace is quite safe." Unconsciously she has voiced Sir Richard's opinion, "Grace would always be 'safe'."

The continuation of this splendid story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming months. With every subscription we send entirely free of cost one of our splendid stereoscopes or any six of our standard patterns, or one of our genuine knit woolen shawls. See pages thirteen and fifteen.

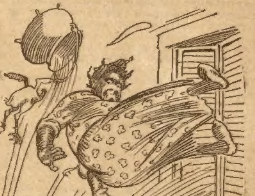
Blackville Poker Notes.



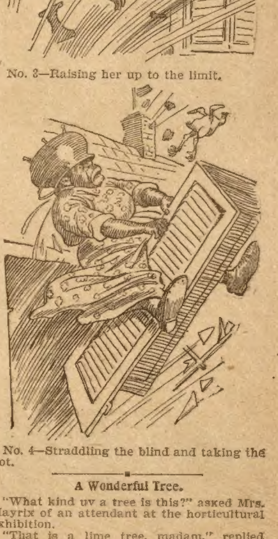
No. 1—Auntie's little game.



No. 2—Going one better.



No. 3—Raising her up to the limit.



No. 4—Straddling the blind and taking the pot.

A Wonderful Tree.

"What kind uv a tree is this?" asked Mrs. Hayrix of an attendant at the horticultural exhibition.

"That is a lime tree, madam," replied the attendant.

"John," she said, turning to her husband, "mebby we kin git one uv them trees to plant in our orchard, then we kin raise our own whitewash."

A Russian Tragedy

Or, WHAT LOVE COULD DO

By Adrienne Roucolle

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE DUKE.

For an instant La Nilta found it impossible to answer, then in low breathless tones, too weak to turn around and face the waiting duke, she replied to his question with the words:

"Yes, I wanted to see you for a few minutes."

The Duke gave a start of surprise and as a sudden emotion paled his face, he cried:

"That voice! Am I mad!"

Rapidly he advanced toward the waiting woman, and, as he caught sight of her face, he exclaimed, joy, passion and desire expressed in that one name:

"La Nilta!"

She turned and faced him. For a second they stood motionless, then, following the impulse of her love, she threw herself in his extended arms, her own encircling his neck while her lips sought his in a kiss in which she put her very soul. Then, suddenly with a cry of intense despair, she remembered all—his station, his love for the Countess, the promise she had just made to save his life at any cost, her own rapidly approaching death. Her arms fell lifeless to her side and with an effort she escaped from his embrace, while she cried in a voice which expressed the whole of her hopeless despair:

"Oh, I forgot, you no longer belong to me. I have just given you to another!"

"Given me to another?" he repeated after her, startled by the change on her face. "I do not understand!"

She wrung her hands. The nearness of his presence, the warmth of the caresses just exchanged, made her sacrifice the harder, made the death she was to welcome in only a few minutes, a terrible phantom from which she now longed to flee. She wanted to live now! Oh, if only for a few days to enjoy a few more hours of that love which had so enslaved her. Then she remembered that the man standing before her was the betrothed of another, that that very night he had publicly proclaimed his love for her rival, and hurriedly she hastened to answer him:

"Ah, the one who just now brought my message to you will soon have won the place within your heart which once was mine,—she—"

"La Nilta, I—" interrupted the Duke, but she did not let him finish the sentence, for in the same panting tones she continued:

"Of what use are those protests, Duke? Why pronounce oaths which your heart denies? You love her and I am forgotten."

Her voice broke on the last word. Would she be forgotten, she who had loved him with such sublime abandon, would she—but she could think no more, once more she felt herself clasped in the arms of the Duke and his voice tender with love, vibrating with passion, fell on her ear like a caress:

"No, I do not love her, no, you are not forgotten!"

"Then why do you marry her? Why have you abandoned me to go to her?" she asked weakly, already subdued by the power of his voice and the thrill of his presence.

He drew her tenderly to the divan, and forcing her to take a seat by his side, with one arm still about her waist and the other pressing both of hers in a passionate clasp, he said:

"You know my position with the Czar? Well, he has ordered that I become the husband of the Countess Polehosky and for the past six weeks I have been forced to play the role of lover."

"Forced!" she said, all her suspicions of his sincerity returning at those words of "lover" and "husband" used in connection with the Countess. "How forced, pray? Since when has the Czar turned into a matchmaker? Better be frank with me, Alexis, better tell me that you love the Countess Polehosky, that you are glad to marry her. Oh, it would make it much easier for me to meet my fate were I sure that you had ceased to love me! I would never have the resignation to leave you were I sure that there still throbbed a flicker of passion in that heart which once was mine. Yes, Alexis, in pity's name, tell me the truth, tell me that you love her."

"I can not tell you that, since it was my love for you, my fear for your safety, my desire to save you from a fate worse than death, that has forced me during the past six weeks to speak of love to another woman while my soul longed for you, to deceive her trusting heart with lying words which every atom of my being denied."

She looked at him with wondering eyes. His grave, handsome face and the frankness with which he returned her questioning gaze carried conviction, and La Nilta, thrilled with joy yet crushed with despair, murmured hoarsely:

"Explain yourself, I do not understand."

"You soon shall. The Czar heard of my growing passion for you. After we returned from our two years' trip throughout Europe, he had me called to him and asked me if the rumors which had reached him were true. At my affirmative reply he sternly ordered me to give you up at once and marry Countess Polehosky, who by birth and wealth was a fit mate for the Duke Alexis Brandanowich."

"What did it matter to him, what you did with your life?" asked La Nilta.

The Duke hesitated. He did not want to wound her by reminding her of what she had been, and what, to the eyes of the world, she would always be; but his hesitation was enough. With a quiver of anguish and a lowering of the head, she said sadly:

"You need not answer that question, Alexis, I understand now. For an instant I had forgotten what I was. He did not want one of his highest nobles, one who he loved as a brother, to continue to live with a woman like me. Yet," and a sudden wave of anger swept over her, "where could you have found among all of those titled ladies, one who could have loved you as I did? Oh, God, I would have gone in the streets to beg if necessary, there would have been no work too hard, no toil too lowly, if only I could have been allowed to remain by your side. I would have given up everything, life itself, for your sake, but this no one would believe; a courtesan I have lived and a courtesan I must die."

"You are right, La Nilta, your love for me was so disinterested and pure that it would have put to shame that of many titled ladies who would dare look down upon you in scorn, but this the Czar could not know. Though I told him, he refused to believe, calling me a love-blinded fool who had fallen in the fatal snares of a clever woman."

"So he ordered you to marry the Countess Polehosky. Had he the right to force you to do it?"

"By my love he had, since after I had flatly refused to obey, he told me that if within two weeks I had not broken with you and begun paying my addresses to the Countess, he would have you thrown into prison and exiled to Siberia, where you could no longer harm society. I then threatened to follow you into exile. To this he replied that he knew enough about your connection with the nihilist party to have you condemned to death, and that he was sure that I would not be fool enough to follow you into eternity."

"What did you do?" asked La Nilta, forgetting in the joy of hearing this revelation, that each minute brought her nearer death and that she could enjoy the bliss of his love for only a few minutes before the silence and darkness of eternity would open up before her.

"For two weeks I was torn between love and terror. Then seeing that his resolution was taken, I yielded, I broke with you and began paying my addresses to the woman imposed upon me."

Hoarsely, La Nilta asked:

"Did you really intend to carry out that imperial order?"

Drawing her more tightly to him, he replied:

"No. It was necessary to play the comedy of obedience for a few weeks while arranging for our mutual safety. Then it was my intention to come to you and together we would have left for some other land where tyrants do not rule, and there I would have made you my wife."

With a cry she tore herself from his passionate embrace, and, wild-eyed and breathless, she stood looking at him with horror and joy mingled in the expression of her face, then she repeated slowly like one who does not understand:

"Your wife! Did you say your wife?"

"Yes," he replied, rising and clasping her anew in his protecting arms, "my wife. For on whom but the woman I love should I bestow my name?"

She tore herself away that she might better see his face and assure herself that this was not a dream created by her overwrought brain. In hoarse, wailing tones, she questioned:

"But my past! Have you forgotten what I am!"

Pitying the evident anguish on her livid, anxious face, he hastened to reply:

"I know and have forgotten nothing, but I love you and you alone."

This was too much for her. She staggered blindly to a chair, holding to his arm for support. A sudden dizziness seized her, everything became blurred before her eyes, a ringing sound filled her ears and a sinking at the heart, a general weakness of the whole body seemed to indicate to her that death was upon her. The sudden joy to think that he, the great and powerful Duke Alexis Brandanowich, loved her enough to wish to redeem her by giving her his name, had perhaps hastened the end which she knew was coming, but what did it matter now? She could afford to die after having been so truly loved. And in spite of the ever increasing weakness which was slowly paralyzing her strength, she murmured:

"Your wife! Your wife! Oh God, his wife!"

Alarmed by her pallor, which became deeper every moment, and the expression of suffering upon her face, the Duke rushed to La Nilta and falling on his knees beside her, seized her cold, damp hands in his, calling to her with sudden alarm:

"La Nilta! Oh, what is it? How pale you are! How cold and damp your hands! You are ill! Let me call for help!"

She opened wide her eyes which in the first moment of weakness she had closed. Sadly she looked at the Duke. She felt a little stronger already. The attack had passed, but it had warned her that time was pressing and that she must hasten to keep her promise to the Countess and save the man who just now had offered to make her his wife. With infinite tenderness in her tones, yet with the calm resignation of one who had ceased to struggle. she simply answered:

"There is no help, Alexis, I am dying."

CHAPTER IX.

THE AGONY.

Those words, "I am dying," fell on the ears of the Duke like a knell, for her face, so wan and haggard, the great dark eyes so bright with the inward glow of the approaching end, all seemed to indicate that she was telling the truth, that indeed death was at hand, and that even while they spoke, the dark angel was hovering near, waiting for the soul about to take its flight for the realms above.

"Dying!" he repeated, that one word being all that could pass the contraction of his throat.

Hurriedly she answered him, jealous of each moment that passed. She had so much she wanted to tell him, so many things to say in farewell, that she feared she would not have time for all.

"Listen, Alexis. Do not interrupt me with useless remarks, for the time is short and I have much to say."

"But I must do somethihg. I can't allow you to die without help. You must be saved, for I do not want you to die! Great God, you're all the world to me, my whole heart and life is wrapped up in you! I would never consent to give you up! But—it is not so, it is only a joke, an attempt to try my love, to know how I would take the possibility of your dying."

He talked rapidly, with sudden terror in the first words and as sudden hope in the latter, for he could not conceive that it was possible that this peerless woman was about to succumb to death. But La Nilta's next words destroyed that hope, for she she said, as she gently stroked his hair and looked at his anxious face with eyes which expressed the love and regret with which her very soul was filled:

"It is, alas, too true. In a few minutes now my heart will have ceased its beatings and my soul will have taken its flight toward the unknown."

He tried to rise, to rush away for help, but placing her two hands on his shoulders with all her strength, she held him back, saying rapidly:

"Do not leave me. Alexis, it is useless to summon aid, for on this side of eternity there is no hope for La Nilta. The poison in my veins has done its deadly work, and now nothing can recall my fast ebbing life."

He sank once more on his knees by her side and with boundless despair in his voice, he questioned wildly:

"But how does it come that you are dying? Here in these rooms. What is the poison of which you speak? When and where did you take it, and why?"

Gently she continued to stroke his hair, lifting the fair ringlets from the white brow, while her eyes devoured in a last farewell look that beloved face which the darkness of death would soon efface forever from her conscious vision. In the same low, tender tones, which nevertheless struck the listening man like a blow, she answered him:

"I die that you may live. At the last meeting of the nihilists it was decreed that you should die, for you had refused to betray the Czar."

He rose from his position at her feet and walking three or four times across the room, replied with sudden agitation:

"I surely could not betray the one who had been like a brother to me, betray him into the hands of blood-thirsty wretches who would ruthlessly take his life without pausing to think that the system which he represented would go on just the same. It's not the Czar they should kill, but the monarchy they should abolish, and that only when they are strong enough morally and intellectually to govern themselves."

Painfully La Nilta rose to her feet, the dizziness had passed but a gradual numbness and coldness of the limbs proclaimed that slowly but surely relentless death was creeping to her heart. So when the Duke paused in his heated defense of his past actions, she hurried to say:

"Yes, I know, but perhaps you know not the rules of our society, he who fails to obey orders must pay with his life for his disobedience."

The Duke returned to La Nilta and seizing her hands in his, asked:

"But tell me about yourself?"

La Nilta hung her head, then replied:

"When I heard that you were condemned to die, I asked to be the one to kill you."

"You wanted to save me?"

She withdrew her hands from his clasp and with sudden fierceness in her tones and manner, answered:

"No, no, my intention was to kill you. I wanted you to die for your neglect toward me, your devotion toward her was driving me to madness. In my jealousy, a jealousy of every instant of the day and night, I longed to avenge myself, destroy your life and break her heart. I preferred to know you cold and still in death, than to think that your love was given to her."

She paused breathless, gave a convulsive laugh of utter despair, then resumed:

"I wanted to do all this, yet tonight when it was in my power to carry out that wish, and while still thinking you false, of my own free will, in complete forgetfulness of self, I have preferred to die that you might live. A woman's love is truly unfathomable."

"That I might live?" he repeated sadly after her. "How could your death save my life, when as you surely ought to have guessed, fifty, nay a hundred hands will be armed and ready to do the work when it becomes known that yours failed at the last minute?"

"I know that, since before coming here Ivan Michelsroff was up to my apartments and warned me that he would be here tonight, and that should my love betray my hate, his would not, and you should fall the victim of his just revenge."

"Ah, Ivan Michelsroff, the one from whom I had the happiness to win you? I do not wonder at his hate, but what surprises me is that, knowing his intentions, you hoped that you might save me and in that hope madly sacrifice your life."

He spoke calmly. The fact that Ivan Michelsroff, his bitterest enemy was upon his track, ready to end his life, brought no terror to his heart. La Nilta had told him that she was dying, her pale, haggard face and rapidly fading eyes, showed that she had told the truth. Then, why should he live, of what use was life with the woman he loved in the grave? But La Nilta had seized his arm in a convulsive hold and was saying:

"Yes, I know the danger, but I also know that you shall flee and ere daylight be far away—saved!"

"And leave you?" he exclaimed.

And leave my lifeless clay for my soul shall have fled. I do not ask you to leave the living woman, but the corpse."

"But if I refuse to go, if I do not consent to play the part of a coward and wish to face my fate like a man?"

"But you shall not refuse!" cried La Nilta, with sudden terror in her tones.

"Nay, better, if tired of life, I decide to die with you?"

"I will not let you!"

La Nilta was breathless with anxiety. Something in the face of the Duke showed her that it would be hard to win his consent to escape, to flee from the awful danger which menaced him, and as she saw that his resistance would be the greater, her desire to save him in spite of himself increased. He had loved her enough to offer to give her his name, she would love him enough to force him to keep the life which in a few years from now he would be glad was preserved and which, after mourning for a time over her death, he could enjoy with another. But the Duke was answering her now:

"How could you stay my hand?"

"By the very love you have for me."

"By my love?" he repeated in surprise, not understanding La Nilta's meaning.

"I will ask of that love," hastened to explain La Nilta in vibrating tones, "the oath that you shall consent to live and that my dying prayer you will grant."

"But your object?" cried the Duke wildly, "Why wish to tie me to this earth on which, you gone, I would no longer care to live?"

Throwing her arms about his neck in an unconscious movement of passion, she answered with her head resting on his bosom.

"I want you to live that you may remember the sweetness of my love, I want some one left behind to mourn upon my grave, I want, as I die, to be sure that on this earth one creature still lives who thinks of me!"

"But that is cruel, that is—" But La Nilta still clinging to him interrupted:

"Not as cruel as you think, for the time will also soon come when you will be glad that I have forced you to live. Some other woman will fill your heart and make life sweet once more. Then when you think of me," and unconsciously she tightened her hold upon his neck, "for I am sure you will always think of me—you will thank the generosity which tonight forces you to live."

She could say no more, a sharp, shooting pain, darting through her heart, caused a cry of suffering and terror to die on her lips, her arms dropped from around the Duke's neck and clasped her bosom, then pale, gasping for breath, she staggered blindly toward the couch, sinking almost fainting on the floor beside it.

The Duke Alexis rushed to her assistance, raised her limp form in his arms, and lifted her on the couch, crying in heart-breaking tones, as he covered her face with passionate kisses:

"La Nilta! this is more than I can bear! It can not be possible! You are not dying!"

She leaned heavily against him, recovering slowly from the attack, then with infinite tenderness in her tones, replied:

"It is, alas, too true!"

She looked up toward him, but her eyes still dimmed by the recent pain, could only faintly see his face. Frightened by this alarming symptom and like a child left alone in the dark, she clung wildly to him, crying:

"Oh, Alexis, my blinded eyes can no longer see your face, the chill of death is creeping to my heart, that heart which loved but you!"

Holding her quivering form tightly pressed in his arms, the Duke said tenderly in her ear:

"Then let me die with you. With my soul as companion for that dark and lonesome journey, you surely would not be afraid, would you sweetheart?"

She shivered, and as her head dropped lower over her bosom she murmured:

"To die together, oh, what bliss! Our souls would leave this earth, where all wish to separate us, and perhaps in another world could remain united forever!"

CHAPTER X.

Seeing that she was about to yield to

his demand, the Duke urged again eagerly:

"Yes, yes, that way we would be united forever!"

For a few moments she did not speak. A short but fierce battle was raging in her heart. Her love called out to her with all the strength of its passion to take him with her to the grave, away from that beautiful Countess, who ere long would have replaced her in his heart, but on the other hand, what would this avail her when once the portals of death had closed upon her? In the cold forgetfulness of the grave, the pangs of jealousy could not follow her, and during the last minute of her life she would feel that she had done her duty to the end, saved, at the sacrifice of her own, the life of the man she had loved. Should she permit him to die with her it would rob her action of an hour ago of all its sublimity and cause it to become a vulgar suicide for both.

These thoughts flashed rapidly through her brain, then her resolution was taken, she would conquer her love and save him at any cost. Loosening his arms from about her, she rose to her feet, walked a few paces away, groping her way in the increasing darkness which seemed to settle over her, then in intense but resolute tones came her answer:

"No, no, Alexis. It can not be, it must not be! I will not be so selfish in my love. You are young, you will learn to love again, perhaps that fair, pale Countess will win your heart in time. Believe me, it is for the best that I should die alone. Now promise, while yet my ears can hear, that you shall live, that you shall seek to escape from the death which menaces you!"

She extended her hands to him in a gesture of passionate pleading, the last of her ebbing strength being put forth in this last appeal. The Duke had risen and stood looking at her hesitating, not wanting to promise, yet finding it hard to resist her pleading voice and face. At last he said:

"La Nilta, it is impossible. I can not promise. I can not live without you. If you die, I die with you."

Hoarsely she demanded:

"Do you love me?"

Raising his arm to take heaven as witness of his words, he replied solemnly:

"God is my witness, I do."

"Then prove it by doing what I ask. It is the last request which my love asks of you; refuse not my dying prayer," she pleaded as, too weak to stand, she let herself sink on a chair.

The Duke paced the room. Could he refuse that last appeal to his love? Yet, could he promise to live when he knew that his despair, when once she was dead, would push him to end his life? While he was deciding which it was to be, life or death, she watched him with haggard face and gasping breath while her white lips muttered:

"How slow is death to come! It is a painless death and will not mar my beauty, but if it does not soon still the beatings of my cowardly heart, I will not be able to resist the promptings of my love and would consent to let him die with me!"

Seeing that still he did not answer, and feeling her own resolution wavering, she again implored:

"Alexis, don't keep me waiting any longer, tell me that you promise!"

The Duke Alexis turned his white and working face toward her and, pausing within a few paces from where she sat, crushed and almost lifeless on the chair, he said with wild despair in his voice:

"La Nilta, you ask the greatest proof of love a woman ever demanded of a man. To live and know you dead, to continue the comedy of life while you are in the grave! Do you know the promise you impose means hell on earth, a torture almost beyond human endurance?"

Trembling she arose from her seat and leaning forward, asked:

"But do you promise?"

"You still insist after what I have said."

With difficulty the words came from her quivering lips, yet she answered with dogged determination:

"I do."

"And that is the only way I can prove my love?" The Duke grew visibly paler for on her face he already read his sentence.

Twice she tried to speak and the Duke began to hope that at the last minute her love would get the better of her grim resolution, but with an imploring look toward heaven for strength, she managed to say:

"It is."

The verdict was pronounced, he must live and suffer! For one instant he looked at her, so pale yet so beautiful, dying for him and with her dying breath forcing him, in a mistaken generosity, to accept the sad gift of life from her hand. Well, he would be as noble and self-sacrificing as she. She was dying though she longed for life, he would live though he wanted to die. Slowly and solemnly the words fell from his lips:

"Then I shall live. I swear it La Nilta!"

She heard the oath which separated them, and swaying as though about to fall, her face convulsed in agony, she simply murmured:

"Thank you."

For an instant neither spoke. The moment was too solemn for words. Just then the door opened and the Countess Polehosky entered. A cry rose to her lips at the sight of La Nilta's face, but conquering her emotion she advanced rapidly toward them.

"Everything is ready," she said. "The horse stands saddled in the garden. You must flee at once, Alexis."

La Nilta looked at her for an instant and the two women gazed silently in each other's eyes, then La Nilta said in low, even tones:

"Have you told your guests that the Duke has been taken violently ill? Have you sent for the doctor?"

"No," answered the Countess.

"Then do so at once. It is the only way to put Ivan off of his guard. When you return Alexis will have left, so you had better bid him farewell before leaving and make your arrangement for the future."

The Countess had already walked to the door, but she paused, looking toward the Duke. La Nilta saw the look and with an effort said to the Duke who had remained motionless by her side:

"Go to her Alexis and bid her farewell until you meet again."

The Duke obeyed, and while he addressed a few hurried words to the Countess, La Nilta, pressing her hands convulsively to her breast, murmured:

"Oh, God, how it hurts to leave him here with her!"

But suddenly the strained, agonized expression of her face was replaced by a look of boundless peace and calm, and letting herself sink once more upon the couch, she said:

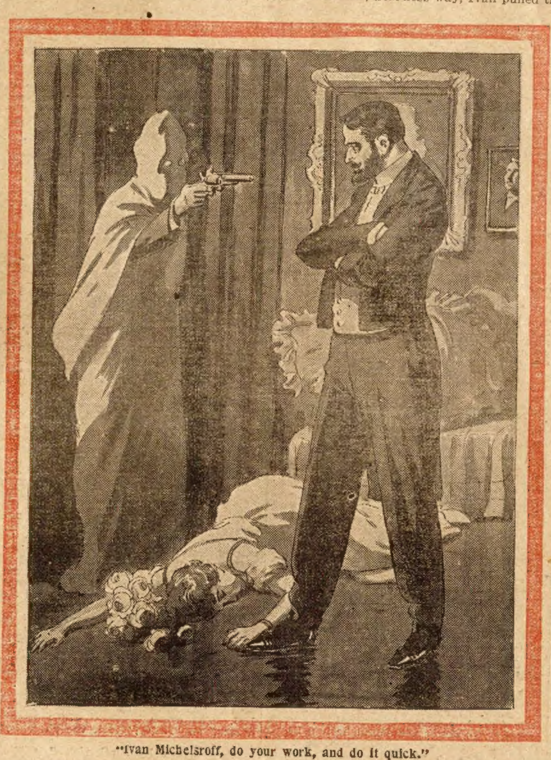
"Here comes relief, kindly death will soon have eased this pain, and perhaps God in his mercy will take pity on my guilty soul!"

The Countess had left the room and the Duke was returning to her, but she could not see him, her eyes blurred by the veil of death could only dimly see the outline of his form, and frightened, she called wildly as she vainly tried to rise to a sitting position:

"Alexis, Alexis, don't leave me! I am dying! One kiss before I go!"

In an instant he was kneeling by her side, her swaying form pressed passionately in his arms. With the last strength of her vanishing life, she encircled his neck with her arms, her lips sought his in a last kiss, then with a faint, "Good-by, Alexis," sank back in his arms, dead.

For a while he could not realize that all was over, but when he did, he covered the white face with kisses and tears, calling her by name, entreating her to speak. But she who had once thrilled at the sound of his voice, remained cold and insensible beneath the ardor of his caresses, the soul which had given life to that perfect body, was already far away, perhaps standing before a just but merciful God and receiving the pardon of its sins.



"Ivan Michelsroff, do your work, and do it quick."

Wild-eyed but calm, the Duke at last arose to his feet. The Countess had reentered the room but, awed by the solemnity of the scene, did not at once disturb him from his contemplation of her dead rival. But the clock striking the hour of midnight, recalled her to the awful reality, and, advancing hurriedly to the despairing man, she touched him gently on the arm, saying at the same time:

"Alexis, the time is pressing, you have not a second to lose!"

Starting like one rudely aroused from a painful dream, he stared at her for an instant without understanding, then replied:

"Yes, I will go. I have promised to live and shall try to keep that promise."

Bending over the dead woman, he reverently closed her eyes, then with one last kiss, he stood once more erect; then stern and cold, he turned to the Countess, saying:

"I am ready, what do you want me to do?"

"Come this way," cried the Countess. "The horse is waiting for you in the garden. You will find your fur overcoat hanging to the saddle horn. There is also money and provisions in the saddle bags."

"Very well," was his only reply, as he followed her toward the side door.

The Countess raised the heavy hangings which concealed the side door, opened it, but started backward with a cry of affright, for a man in the white spectral gown of the traditional ghost, stood before her with a levelled revolver in his hand.

"Alexis, escape by the other door!" she cried, before the man could lay his hand over her mouth. "There is an armed assassin in this hall!"

"Silence!" hissed the man as he pushed her roughly aside and sent her reeling in a dead faint to the floor.

The Duke, warned by the Countess, was walking slowly toward the other door. Grimly he was keeping his promise to the dead woman. He would use every means in his power to escape, then if he failed he would not have to fear La Nilta's reproaches when he would join her in the great Beyond.

"Stop!" ordered the man as he stepped into the room, "that other door is guarded!"

The Duke turned. Escape was impossible and he was contented. Proudly folding his arms he faced his murderer, saying in calm, quite tones:

"Ivan Michelsroff, do your work and do it quick. Here, fire at my heart and end it all." He unfolded his arms that the bullet might find no obstacle on its way to his heart, then he waited.

The man hesitated for an instant. He could not see La Nilta from where he stood, and thinking her still alive, he laughed in a sinister fashion. He slowly took aim.

"I shall do my work with pleasure, Duke Alexis, for while serving my country, I will also be settling an old score."

A scornful smile was his only answer, not a muscle of the Duke's face betraying emotion.

It is probable that Ivan would have continued to torture his one time rival longer, but the Countess was stirring, he must act quick if he wished to make good his escape.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"I am."

Without further hesitation, in the most cold-blooded, heartless way, Ivan pulled the trigger. The Duke started backward, brought his hands to his heart, and staggering to the couch on which La Nilta lay, cried with sudden triumph:

"Thank you, Ivan, of your own free will you have reunited me to the woman I loved!" and sinking dying by La Nilta's side, he added:

"La Nilta, I come!"

When Ivan Michelsroff saw what he had done, he gave a deep curse of powerless rage.

"Fool that I was, I should have let him live!"

But fear for his own safety did not give him time for further words, for with a "God curse them both!" he rushed into the hall and mounting the waiting horse without, was soon lost in the snowy vapors of the foggy night.

The Countess Polehosky recovered rapidly from the shock of this double death. Her shallow nature could not long remember either those she loved or those she hated, and though scarcely a year has passed since the tragic event, it is claimed by the gossips of the capital that she is about to be married to an Italian prince, who has been struck by her beauty.

The end.

An Experimental Dog.

BY MAX ADELER.

Cooley's boy had a liver-colored dog, which he has upon several occasions made the subject of very interesting and instructive experiments. Originally the dog's tail curled up over its back; but Cooley's boy was prejudiced in favor of tails that hung down behind, so, after amputating the dog's tail with a hatchet, he spent a whole morning trying to graft a skate-strap on the stump.

It was not a courageous dog. It would bark all night, when nobody was about, but if a tramp came near the house in the day-time, the dog would put the skate-strap between his legs and go and lie down behind the stove.

Cooley's view was that he would prefer a fighting dog, and one day he read in a paper that a timid dog could be made brave by filling his meat with gunpowder and red pepper. Accordingly, he put about a quarter of a pound of pepper, and a little powder in some meat, rolled it up in a kind of ball, and tossed it to the dog. The dog swallowed it as quick as a flash.

For a few moments the animal seemed contented. But presently he gave a little start, and then paused and looked around to observe if anything had happened. Then he gave another jump, and began to assume a very solemn appearance. All of a sudden he uttered a sharp howl and began to circulate around the garden. He went faster and faster, and Cooley is willing to swear to at least four hundred revolutions a minute. Over the gooseberry bushes, through the asparagus-bed, across the fences, among the beanpoles he flew with fury, snapping at Cooley as he passed him, scaring the chickens, and setting them to cackling, and smashing the vegetation into ruin.

The louder Cooley called to him to stop, the faster he went, and at last Cooley got his gun and tried to shoot him. He shot fifteen times, and blew holes into the smoke-house door, killed four chickens, and put half a pound of quail-shot in his Durham cow; but the dog still revolved, and went so fast that he looked like a single streak of dog, reaching all the way around the garden.

At last the animal ran against the pump, and, being switched off of his course, he dashed through the kitchen door, knocked down the stovepipe, whirled into the dining-room across the table, smashing two dollars' worth of crockery, burst through the open door to the parlor, and brought up against the mirror, shivering it to atoms. Then he fell on the Brussels carpet, had spasms all over the floor for an hour or two, and finally expired, with his hind legs in the grate, and his head on a forty-dollar rug, which was covered with beef and red pepper.

They buried him at the roots of the Isabella grave-vine, and Cooley's boy, after recovering from the thrashing that his father gave him with a fence paling, finally came to the conclusion that as a matter of practical fact red pepper will not make a dog anxious for war.

The Doctor's Mistake.

A Cincinnati doctor, who thinks that all the ills of the human race can be traced to the drinking of coffee and tea, entered a restaurant recently and seated himself opposite an Irishman who was busying himself trying to dispose of a steaming cup of coffee.

"How often do you use coffee?" queried the doctor.

"I drink it morning, noon and night, sir."

"Don't you experience a slight dizziness of the brain on retiring at night?"

"Indeed I do, sir, very frequently."

"You have a sharp pain through the temples and in and around the eyes."

"Right you are," replied the Irishman.

"You are possessed with a drowsiness when you awake in the morning, and your head often aches and feels very heavy."

"Right again," answered the Irishman, still sipping his coffee.

"Well, then," exclaimed the doctor, sitting erect in his chair, "aren't you now convinced that the coffee is the couse?"

"Is that so?" said the Irishman in astonishment. "Faith, I always thought it was the whisky."

Not a Teetotaler.

"Don't you drink wine, Mr. Clayton?" the charming daughter of the host asked, lifting her own glass and smiling across at the young man.

"No; I never do," he replied, blushing.

"O, but I am sure you will this time—just one little glass—with me?" she insisted.

"No, thank you," was the resolute reply, and the minister looked upon him with growing admiration. The young lady very nearly achieved a pout.

"You won't, then?" she asked.

"No," was the firm reply, though the blush of embarrassment deepened on his cheek. "I never drink wine," he added, "but if—er—you have got a little old Bourbon, I reckon I could stand three or four fingers."

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Keep on doing your Christmas shopping early.

Don't wait for the dead past to bury its dead; cremate it.

Of course, it is not right if you are left without a Christmas present.

Any man who would boast of his charitable acts is eligible for a tin halo.

Fortunately children do not learn to talk until after the tooth-cutting period.

What do European noblemen do when they are not marrying American heiresses?

This is the season of the year when the evergreen family tree begins to bear fruit.

For the man who overdid it the New Year's resolution stands waiting with open arms.

If a political candidate is unable to work the voters he'll have to go to work at something else.

One of the things a family man has to be thankful for is that Christmas comes but once a year.

The fable of the tortoise and the hare teaches us that perseverance usually gets the gate receipts.

You know that you can change it for something useful. The stores are very accommodating.

To those people who feel as if they had been eating a turkey a day, plain corn beef sounds good.

There is probably nothing quite so empty in all the world as an empty stocking on Christmas morning.

Did you ever imagine that a boy could extract from a tin horn so many sounds that are not music?

If a woman buys her husband a Christmas present it is usually something the whole family can use.

It is an easy matter to accomplish some great things, otherwise the average man wouldn't even have a look-in.

Besides, as long as you keep up that Santa Claus myth your son will never know what a generous old dad he has got.

They really ought to have put enough glue in the toys to hold them together until the tinkle of old Santa Claus' sleigh bells had died away in the distance.

These are happy days when grandpas and grandmas, uncles and aunties and fathers and mothers of seven or thereabouts pity the forlorn members of the race-suicide tribe.

White Hand of the Upper Air

By J. BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS

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CHAPTER XIII.

After Jansen Moore had extinguished the lamp, it was necessary for him to plan rapidly. If there was an eye up near the ceiling at the spyhole, this blowing out of the light would foil the watcher.

But at the same time it would give any one an opportunity to remove the secret panel and creep in from the attic without discovery.

Jansen Moore was still in his stocking-feet. Picking up his shoes, he passed softly to the door, unlocked and opened it, intending to go downstairs.

Thrusting his head out of the room into the square hallway, he listened with bated breath.

There came to him from the attic stairs a muffled sound. It might be a retreating mouse—or Giles McNoir crouching upon the stairs, waiting for him.

The young man returned to his room and locked the door.

Then he stole to the window.

Having reached it, he felt along the wall to make sure it had not moved since his entrance.

It stood securely in place.

He looked out of the window.

The night was dark, but unclouded, and the roof under the window-ledge was distinctly visible.

Jansen Moore slipped over the window-sill and stood upon the shingled roof; still holding his shoes in his hand. His anxious eye told him that he was alone upon the roof; or at least, if another was up there, he must be lying upon the other side of the comb.

Jansen Moore felt his way cautiously over the roof to where the branches of the silver poplar projected above the eaves. It was his intention to reach the ground by climbing down the tree.

After gaining the ground, he would flee from the hotel.

And then what?

He was a stranger in Carvertown, and knew not where to go. It would be approaching midnight and there was no other hotel in the village. He had a story to tell of finding a woman's garment in the attic, but Giles McNoir would no doubt claim that they belonged to some one in the building, or that he knew nothing about them. There would be the secret panel to expose, and that would be rather difficult for the landlord to explain away. There was the gold-piece and the handkerchief in the drawer—they would help to corroborate Moore's tale. The young man now wished that he had brought the handkerchief with him. True, he had seen no initials upon it, no writing of indelible ink; but now that Jansen Moore remembered severing the knots with his knife, there came to his recollection the crinkling of paper in the knot. In tearing the charm from its place, a bit of fine paper had fluttered to the floor. The young man had thought nothing of it then, in his excitement over his strange discovery. Now he was disturbed by the reflection that some clew might have been upon the bit of paper—some written word.

He reached the silver poplar, and laid his hand upon the nearest bough.

Thus steadying himself, he peered over the edge of the roof.

Directly under him stood a broad-shouldered man, leaning against the trunk of the tree.

At first Jansen Moore thought it was Giles McNoir, but a clear scrutiny told him it was Giles's brother, Bill.

Jansen Moore quickly drew back, to avoid discovery. Why was Bill McNoir at the foot of the tree, unless to prevent the guest's escape? No doubt the sound he had heard from the attic stair had proceeded from another McNoir, guarding that avenue of escape. There were but two ways to freedom—the tree and the staircase. He was cut off from both.

The cold perspiration broke out upon the young man's brow. After waiting some time, he cautiously peered over the eaves.

Bill McNoir had walked around to the other side of the tree, and was looking upward. Jansen Moore drew back swiftly. He did not think he had been discovered.

As much as he dreaded the thought of going back to his bedroom, it appealed to him more forcibly than hovering upon the margin of the roof, with the enemy directly beneath. There was, in this precarious situation, the continual fear that some one might slip up behind and shove him to destruction. This fear kept him constantly looking upon first one side, then another.

Accordingly he started upon his return to the dormer window. He was a considerable distance from it, when he saw that which rooted him to the spot in something like superstitious terror.

In the window-space, about halfway between the sill and the bottom of the raised sash, suddenly appeared a white hand. There was no arm attached to it. Apparently, it was cut out of white cloth, yet preserved a horizontal position as if held in air by invisible fingers. Through this hand streamed a brilliant light which was visible only through the meshes of the cloth.

Even as Jansen Moore stared at this startling phenomenon, the light vanished.

For several moments the hand was to be seen, dimly swinging against the blackness of the room.

Then it, too, disappeared.

Without further hesitation, Jansen Moore went to the room window, holding his pistol in his hand. A definite danger was preferable to this intangible horror. Where he had seen the white hand, there was but empty space. If there was a man in the room who had caused the white hand to appear by means of a dark-lantern, or other mechanical device, the young man was determined to close with him and end the suspense. And yet, in climbing through the window, he would offer himself as an easy target to any hostile aim.

He did not know what to do.

As it happened, he was relieved from choosing his own course of action.

Hearing a slight noise overhead, he looked up quickly at the angle of the roof which projected over the dormer window.

He caught a sudden glimpse of an evil face looking down at him, almost within reach. It was one of the McNoir brothers.

At the same moment Jansen Moore felt a stinging pain at his throat. His breathing was cut short. The man above him had thrown a slip-knot over his head.

He clutched at the rope with frantic hands, and in doing so, dropped his pistol, which slipped down the roof and dropped with a thud to the ground, not far from where Bill McNoir stood in ambush.

A pair of strong arms were extended from the bedroom, and Jansen Moore felt himself clapped about the waist.

Another rope was whipped about his arms, pinioning them to his side.

Then the strain upon his neck relaxed.

He was drawn roughly into the bedroom and cast upon the floor.

Before he could scramble up, the end of the rope, already binding his arms, was wrapped about his legs.

He was now unable to move, while the rope, which still looped his neck, threatened, by means of little telegraphic jerks from above, to tighten upon his windpipe should he make an outcry.

A sudden light flashed over him, half-blinding him. Then it disappeared and the chamber seemed the darker for the sudden illumination, which had come and gone so strangely.

CHAPTER XIV.

For several moments there was profound silence in the bedroom.

Jansen Moore tested the rope binding his arms and legs, but was unable to make it give in the least particular.

At the same time, the noose remained uncomfortably tight around his neck.

Out of the darkness came a voice from near the middle of the room, harsh, but cautious: "All right, I've got him!"

Evidently this was not addressed to the prisoner, but to the accomplice outside.

There came the sound of some one climbing down from the dormer roof, then entering the window.

"All right," said the newcomer.

Then the first man, the one who had dragged the young man in from the roof, flashed his dark-lantern over the table, let its beams rest upon the lamp, and the second man lit the lamp. Then the dark-lantern was turned off.

From where Jansen Moore lay upon the carpet, he could see his two captors perfectly plain. One of them was the giant Giles McNoir, and the other was one of his scarcely less gigantic brothers.

Neither of the McNoirs paid the least attention to Jansen Moore, except that the one holding the rope that had lassoed him, still grasped the rope ready to tighten it about the prisoner's throat at any moment.

Giles McNoir walked to the window and flashed his lantern from the sill.

Then he stood there waiting, his back to the prisoner.

In due time a third man was heard slipping along the roof.

It was Bill McNoir, who had scaled the silver poplar. He now entered by means of the window, and Giles drew down the blind.

Giles and Bill seated themselves upon the bed. The other brother, whom they addressed as "Ratty," took the chair beside the table.

"You've got him, all right," said Bill giving Jansen Moore a most cursory glance and then feeling in his coat for his chewing tobacco.

"If I hadn't got him," said Giles in his surliest tone, "would I have flashed you the signal?"

Bill found his tobacco, and nibbled off a chew, as he did so, looking at Giles with his head tilted up, and one eye half-closed. When his chew was secured he said, "I don't know what you would have done. Don't you begin a-quarreling with me, Giles McNoir; I'm a peaceable man, and I ain't a-going to have nobody quarreling with me."

"Oh, go to grass," said Ratty impatiently. "Look here, fellers, let's get to business at once and have an end to it."

"Well," said Bill, "I'm agreeable. What's to be did?"

"I hate to kill a man," said Giles, looking moodily at Jansen Moore, "It ain't so much on account of the traces of it that is apt to be made, as it is that I kinder feel sorry for the man himself."

"Don't bother about the traces," said Bill beginning to feel the soothing influence of his tobacco, and in consequence taking an optimistic view of life; "We can just hang him up to his bedpost, like, and folks will think he has went and hanged himself."

"Bill," said Giles, "you are always taking a too hopeful look at things and that's what gets us into trouble. I am not looked on any too favorably now in the neighborhood, and I don't want any dead bodies dangling in my rooms if I can help it."

"Well, there's the river," said Ratty McNoir impatiently. "It was just made for washing corpses hither and yon, seeing as it ain't never been dredged for to make it navigable. And I say, what other use will you put the river to? You say, fishing But they ain't no fish to be catched there. Unless it's some fish as was caught the day of the big burying."

"Ratty," said Giles, "loosen the rope on that rascal's neck, will you, I'd like to hear from him, seeing as he's the most interested party."

"I'll loosen it a bit," said Ratty begrudgingly, "but he may as well know that if he gives a chirp for help, I'll draw this here rope so tight, he'll just double up like a jumping-jack."

"I say," remarked Bill, "that now as we've all took bearing of one another, that that lamp ought to be put out."

"Same here," said Giles rising. He went to the table, opened the drawer and took out the handkerchief and the gold charm. Thrusting these into his pocket, he blew out the light and returned to the bed, carrying his closed-up dark-lantern.

"Now, Mr. Moore," said Giles, "you are given full liberty to speak, if you employ one of those light, easy tones which I make no doubt is stored away in your chest; but if you make a cry, we'll do for you at once. Also you are given permission to speak to only such points as we put before you and not to go to excursioning like public speakers with time to kill."

"And Giles," growled Bill, "suppose you don't kill any, yourself!"

"Now boys," said Ratty, "enough of that. I ain't a-going to have any fighting amongst hands till this spy is disposed of."

"Mr. Moore," began Giles McNoir, "what I want to know of you is this—and it's the only thing I want to know; how would you rather die?"

"That's it," Bill acquiesced. "You name us some easy way as strikes your fancy, and if it can be did, we'll follow your wishes. Get us up something that won't leave no traces of blood or violence, that's what we want."

"Gentlemen," said Jansen Moore, "I have not done any of you an injury."

"And you ain't a-going to," remarked Ratty. "Come, speak to the question, Mr. Moore."

"You have no reason to do me an injury," said Jansen Moore. "Why should you do violence to an innocent man who wishes you no harm? As you have yourselves pointed out, such deeds leave their evidences behind them. In the long run retribution must fall upon you. Then why incur this risk? You have nothing to gain and all to lose by mistreating me."

"Mr. Moore," said Giles decidedly, "we are going to kill you. That is already settled. You settled that for us. Now, we thought perhaps you might have a preference as to the mode. That was all. If you can't talk to that point, Ratty might just as well tighten up your talking-works again."

"Mr. McNoir," said Jansen Moore, "will you at least tell me how I have, as you say, settled this for myself?"

"Don't answer him," Ratty interposed, "it will just kill time."

"You've settled it," came Giles's heavy voice out of the darkness, "by prowling. Let me tell you at once, sir, that I have seen everything you have done since you came upstairs."

"But what have I done?" expostulated Jansen Moore.

"Now, you see!" growled Ratty, "I knew we would get into this if we once began."

"Look here, Mr. Moore," said Giles McNoir fiercely, "you tell me in a word who you came to Carverton to ferret out, and who it is you have been looking for clews to, in this room and in the attic. Give us that name this instant, you white-livered spy!"

Giles started up from the bed, and although it was intensely dark, the young man knew he was hovering over his prostrate form, and divined that his face was disfigured with passion. Nevertheless he exclaimed promptly, "Keeneyes!"

"Hey?" said Giles in a changed voice.

"I came here to find out what has become of Keeneyes, the detective," said Jansen Moore firmly.

There were several moments of silence, then there came a short laugh from Bill. "What do we know about your Keeneyes?"

Ratty growled, "The eagles carried him off; or the white hand."

There was another silence.

Then Giles McNoir said slowly, "See here, Mr. Moore, what is Keeneyes to you?"

"The best friend I ever had," said Jansen Moore; "and at one time, he was the only friend. His wife wanted me to hunt for him. I came where he had been boarding. I looked about for clews to him."

"Do you mean to tell me you didn't come here to investigate the—the Bloor triple mystery?"

"I care nothing about that mystery," said Jansen Moore with all the earnestness of truth upon trial. "I was away on my honeymoon when I heard that Keeneyes had disappeared. For no other consideration would I have cut short that bridal tour. We were in Yellowstone Park. I came at once in answer to Mrs. Zellers' telegram—she is Keeneyes's wife. That's why I am here."

Bill remarked, "I believe the idiot is speaking the truth!"

"Well, Mr. Moore," growled McNoir, "we know nothing of your Keeneyes."

"If that is so," said Jansen Moore, "what have you against me? What posible motive can you have to want to put me out of your way?"

"If you hadn't been a fool," said Giles, "we could have no motive. But we aren't fools, if you are. Now, see here; we are not children. You say you looked for clews to Keeneyes. Well, you didn't find any. But you found other things. That's the trouble. You've found too much. You may not have been looking for them, but you found them. And now you have them in your knowledge. Mr. Moore, you know too much; and to be plain, that's why we must remove you from the situation. The situation is already complicated sufficiently. I am speaking to you kindly, but succinctly. You understand me. If we turned you loose, we would be turning other things loose besides you."

"Gentlemen," said the young man, "I will promise——"

"Don't go any farther," said Ratty. "Your promises are worth nothing to me. I break mine when it's convenient and I judge everybody else will do the same if put to it."

"Which brings us back to the original point," said Bill.

"Yes," said Giles slowly, "you know too much. You've got to be eliminated. When I was in school I learned there are several ways of elimination; subtraction will apply to you, I judge."

"I never went to school," remarked Bill, "but I can handle plain every-day words; and this is it, Mr. Moore—to be hung, or drowned, or knifed, or such like, which word would you rather?"

"Gentlemen," said Jansen Moore, "when you consider that I had no desire to pry into any of your personal affairs——"

"I'm going to put an end to this," said Ratty, stumbling up in the darkness. "The fellow won't tell us how he wants to die, and if the rest of you boys are agreeable, I'm going to string him to the bedpost. We can cut his arms and legs loose afterward, and leave things favorable for the suicide idea."

There was tense silence following these light, but evidently serious words.

Then Giles spoke in his coarse, sinister voice; "Yes, go ahead; we've fooled away a lot of time for nothing."

"Turn on the lantern," said Ratty grimly.

"No," Bill interposed hastily, "go ahead and do it in the dark. They always look so horrible—and a fellow feels like slackening the rope, and—he gets unnerved."

Jansen Moore felt that his last chance was slipping away from him. Appeals to those coarse natures, brutal in their callousness, was out of the question. He opened his mouth wide and gave utterance to a loud scream, which, however, was instantly checked; and, as the noose drew tight, nothing but a choking gurgle was to be heard from the prostrate form.

CHAPTER XV.

As the slip-knot tightened at Jansen Moore's throat, he gave himself up for lost.

True, he had started to scream at the top of his voice; but the noose had tightened so swiftly that the scream had been changed to a gurgle before it could be prolonged sufficiently to arouse any one downstairs.

Moreover, from the peculiar situation and isolation of the bedroom, the young man would probably not have been heard by the guests in the hotel, had he been suffered to call at the top of his voice.

After his shout was checked, the rope slightly relaxed about his throat. Evidently Ratty McNoir hesitated to kill his prisoner.

In the intense darkness of the room, there was something terrible in the waiting of the three ruffians, something inhuman in the awful silence.

It was soon broken by Giles McNoir asking in a harsh, agitated voice, "Is he done for?"

"Not yet," answered his brother. "I—I was just waiting a minute."

"Waiting for what?" cried Bill sharply.

"I don't know," answered the other dully.

Giles flashed on his dark-lantern and its light fell upon Jansen Moore's face.

"Give me the rope," said Giles, "I'll fix him. I'm not a kitten. I've got nerve. Here—hand it over."

"No," said Ratty with new resolution, "I've begun this and I'll end it. But shut off that light, will you? I don't want to see him."

Giles pushed to the slide with a growl of impatience.

His brother drew upon the rope.

To Jansen Moore it was as if a circle of fire bound his neck. His breathing was checked, and his tongue protruded from his helpless mouth.

He forgot his friend whose disappearance had brought him hither; he forgot his young bride. He thought of nothing but air—air—if he could only get his breath!

"I'll fix him!" snarled Ratty, who, in order to nerve himself to his hideous task, had wrought himself up into a sort of rage against his helpless victim.

At this moment there came a crash that caused the would-be murderer to drop the rope, while Giles and Bill started to their feet with oaths, too bewildered at being thus distracted from the tragedy, to collect their senses. Giles dropped his lantern and his brother in stumbling forward, gave it a kick that sent it across the room.

Jansen Moore had felt a blessed relief at the dropping of the rope, for though it still encircled his neck with deadly tension, he was enabled to breathe in little gasps. By rubbing his neck against the carpet, he loosened the rope still more.

The three McNoir brothers stood rooted to the spot in the darkness listening.

Suddenly a light leaped out of the darkness, and all saw that the secret panel had been pushed forward.

It lay prostrate upon the floor near the dormer window.

Beyond the opening was to be seen the unfinished ceiling and wall of that part of the attic wherein Jansen Moore had found the woman's clothes.

Bill McNoir whispered, "The wind must of blowed it down, from Mr. Moore's leaving it unfastened."

Giles McNoir objected, also in a coarse whisper, "Mr. Moore didn't leave that light burning!"

"That ain't the candle, nohow," whispered Ratty. "S-sh! Let's wait. Whoever's out there—we're standing in the dark. We'll have the drop on 'em, S-sh!"

"Don't shoot if you can help it," Giles whispered, "it will bring the house upstairs."

They waited in silence.

Presently Giles whispered, "Somebody ought to go over there and see what the light is."

"And what made the wall fall in?" said Bill; "but I ain't a-going."

"I'm for getting out of here," Ratty whispered. "We're found out; somebody is in that attic and knows our secret. We've got to leave this country."

"S-sh!" cautioned Bill.

A faint sound was heard from the attic, beyond the blank space left by the overturned panel. Then came a woman's voice. "You are killing me!" it came in a faint, agonized whisper.

"Merciful heavens!" ejaculated Giles McNoir reeling backward upon the edge of the bed. "It's—it's—it's her ghost!"

Against the naked board-wall of the attic appeared a shadow, swiftly moving, and so close to the light that it was distorted into the hideous shape of a deformed creature.

The next moment, a figure appeared at the opening.

It was the appearance of a woman upon her knees, dressed in the garments which Jansen Moore had discovered in the attic.

As the figure knelt at the secret opening, the mysterious light was full upon it.

There was revealed the straw hat, the red feather and the curled brim standing out in distinct lines. There was the skirt and jacket in wild disarray.

Around the neck was the white collar, showing the dark bloodstains.

The face was horribly disfigured.

Wild eyes glared from cheeks blue with suffering, splotched with blood, and white with a ghastly whiteness about the lips as with the pallor of death.

This hideous apparition remained upon its knees with its arms extended toward the three brothers, while from the distorted lips came the whispered plaint again and again:

"You are killing me! you are killing me! you are killing me!"

It seemed to Jansen Moore an interminably long time that she knelt thus, whispering her accusation in a choking voice.

In reality it was not long. Jansen's terror, scarcely less acute than that of the criminals, prolonged the weirdness of the moment.

The three brothers recovered from their stupefication at the same instant, as if a magic hand had at the same moment touched in each the spring that prompts toward self-preservation.

Without a word Giles McNoir leaped toward the window and went running across the roof toward the silver poplar.

He was followed by Bill, who was at the eaves of the house as soon as Giles touched the first bough.

Ratty, being nearer the door, sprang thither, and finding it locked, tore desperately at the knob, as if too unnerved to turn the key.

In his desperation, he shook the key upon the floor.

Spurred on by supernatural strength, the result of terror, he bent all his power upon the door, tore it open, and fled downstairs.

Then the mysterious light vanished.

Jansen Moore, his brow damp with cold perspiration, lay in his ropes, at first too paralyzed to make a sound.

Then realizing that his captors had fled, he lifted up his voice and gave utterance to a terrific cry.

There was no response to his call.

Suddenly he felt a hand upon his face.

He squirmed away in the darkness, gasping, "Who are you?"

The hand slipped from his face to his body, and felt its way along his arm.

Jansen Moore writhed and tried to elude the mysterious fingers, which glided so flutteringly, yet so tenaciously.

The hand slipped down to his hand, still tied with cruel force to his side.

The mysterious hand hovered about his wrist, and almost at once the young man felt the force upon his wrist released.

The rope had been severed.

His left arm was now free.

The mysterious hand again felt its way to his hand, and Jansen Moore felt something cold and hard thrust between his fingers.

It was the handle of a long knife.

"Who are you?" Jansen Moore demanded again. His voice was now steady, for he realized that it was a friend who had come to him in the darkness.

At first he received no answer.

Then from the secret opening of the attic there floated to him these strange words, soft, intangible, flute-like: "I am neither man nor woman; I am neither ghost nor child; I am the White Hand of the Upper Air. Farewell, Jansen Moore, farewell."

CHAPTER XVI.

For a moment Jansen Moore lay stupefied by these strange words from that which proclaimed itself neither man nor woman—only a white hand.

His inactivity, however, was only for a moment.

A keen knife was in his hand, and his left arm was free.

He began hacking desperately at the ropes that bound him a helpless prisoner, spurred on by the thought that the McNoir brothers might return at any moment.

In the meantime, the drowsy bellboy had been aroused by Ratty McNoir's plunging downstairs and rushing out upon the street.

Neither had Jansen Moore's loud cry been wholly disregarded.

More than one guest of the hotel moved uneasily about in his room, hastily dressing.

The bellboy soon found himself confronted by several men, eager to know the cause of the disturbance; and, knowing nothing, all went upstairs whence the cry had proceeded.

When the attic bedroom was reached, Jansen Moore had freed himself from the rope and was standing weakly in the middle of the floor, feeling ill.

In rapid, but halting phrases, he told what had happened.

One of the men who had come up to investigate the cry, was a man named Pump. He was a detective, and he had been employed by Captain Slimm to investigate the Bloor farm mystery.

He at once took matters in charge.

An attempt was made to open the secret panel, which Jansen Moore found closed on regaining his liberty. As it could not be moved, Pump, according to the young man's directions, went around through the attic.

He found it barred on that side and soon had it lying prostrate upon the bedroom floor.

Not a vestige was to be found of the suit of woman's clothes which Jansen Moore described in detail. Evidently the apparition had worn everything away.

Nor was the gold charm or cut handkerchief to be found. These had been thrust into Giles McNoir's pocket.

In the meantime the village had been roused, and the three McNoir brothers had been searched for, without success.

A party hurried out to Jimmy Bloor's farm, thinking that as Mrs. Bloor was a sister of the brothers, they might have gone thither to hide.

But there was no trace of them on the way; and the farmer was so astonished at the inquiries made, that the genuineness of his amazement was beyond question.

In brief, Giles, Bill and Ratty McNoir had vanished as completely as Keeneyes, or Fred, or Lena Bloor.

There was, however, a radical difference in the manner of their departure.

They had run away as criminals, and as criminals must be hiding somewhere in the neighborhood.

The nearest station agents were notified to stop them should they appear at any of the platforms. The nearby towns were also called up and put upon their guard.

As to the agency which had provided Jansen Moore with a knife, and which had proclaimed itself "The White Hand of the Upper Air," the brain of Carverton refused to act. It was stupefied by this White Hand. The white hand found in Lena's bucket after her vanishing, was but a hand cut out of cloth; the hand that had fluttered to Jimmy Bloor's feet on the disappearance of Keeneyes, was of a similar nature. But the White Hand that could place a material knife in Moore's fingers must be other than an object cut out of cloth. But what it was, no one attempted to explain.

"It's simply past comprehension," said Captain Slimm. "It's one of them things that is, and nobody knows what or why."

"I shall find out," said Mr. Pump. "I have been a detective for fifteen years. I've worked on the same case that Keeneyes has worked on."

"Which one of you worked it out?" Excellent T. Smith asked unkindly.

"I've worked on the same case with Keeneyes," said Mr. Pump raising his voice "and nobody has ever made me disappear. I'd like to see any body of men make me disappear! Now, you got this Keeneyes to look into the Bloor mystery. What did he do? He disappeared. Was that what he was hired for? In my opinion, gentlemen he saw he couldn't make heads or tails of it, and he's run off. That's my opinion. And I pretty near don't blame him. Why, all this talk and phenomena of white hands is simply ridiculous."

"Then what do you think?" asked the Captain.

"I think," said Mr. Pump slowly, "that the McNoir brothers are at the bottom of the mystery. It stands to reason. They tried to kill Mr. Moore—they have run away, thereby confessing their criminality. They fixed up a white hand in Mr. Moore's window to scare him as he stood on the roof. If they made one white hand, they made all of 'em. It stands to reason."

"But, Mr. Pump," said Jansen Moore, who by this time had recovered from his mistreatment, "do you think it was the McNoir brothers who brought me that knife, after they had run out of the room? And do you think they got scared at a ghost that they had fixed up, themselves?"

"Hum, hum!" said Mr. Pump. And in fact, what else could he say?

"To be plain," said Captain Slimm, "I don't think any one supposition will account for all these strange events; and when it comes to grappling with the situation, my mind ain't itself. It just goes off a-wool-gathering."

"And I must add," said Jansen Moore, "that Keeneyes is an intimate friend of mine. And I know him well enough to be able to assure you that whatever he has done, he has not run off from this case."

"Well, well," said Mr. Pump, "he is gone at all events; and it is lucky you have me on the premises, ready to go to work without delay."

As the hotel was filled with newspaper men and others interested in the mystery, and as the villagers could not accommodate so many strangers, Captain Slimm assumed temporary proprietorship of the hotel, that the attendants might be kept together till something definitely was known of the McNoirs. The old soldier recognized the fact that he had placed himself in a situation of some danger, and the office was guarded at night as if the building had been in a state of siege.

Nobody cared to occupy the attic-bedroom, because it was too accessible from the silver poplar. Jansen Moore took the small back bedroom which Giles had originally placed at his disposal, and provided himself with a lock and key.

The young man was eager to discover something about Keeneyes, but as he had never taken the initiative in a mystery case, he found himself forced to depend upon Mr. Pump as his leader. Together they explored miles of the countryside, together they examined the Bloor farm and the woods beyond the blackberry thicket.

A week went by, a week of ceaseless toil but, so far as finding a clew to the Bloor mystery was concerned, absolutely without results.

Jansen Moore found himself busy from morning till night without accomplishing anything.

One night, some eight or nine days after the young man's arrival at Carverton, some stranger must have dropped into town; for the next morning the early risers of the village were thrown into something of a panic by a new discovery.

Stretched across Main street, between the general store and a private residence, was a long, sagging wire.

At the middle of this wire, directly over the thoroughfare, swung a piece of cloth, cut out in the shape of a human hand. The one who first discovered this amazing phenomenon, hastened to spread the news.

Captain Slimm was notified, who at once called Mr. Pump from his bed. "We haven't touched it," said the Captain, clattering excitedly with his crutches. "As you're a detective, we've left it to you to see all there is to be saw."

"You have done well," said Mr. Pump, dressing in the utmost haste.

When the detective went out upon the street, he was accompanied by Jansen Moore.

The sun had not yet risen, but the light of approaching dawn was in the sky, and against its red blush, the white hand showed grotesquely.

"Have it down!" Mr. Pump ordered.

With some difficulty, Excellent T. Smith scaled to the roof of his store, and cast off the wire from the chimney.

Wire and white hand fell into the street.

The detective's shrewd eye at once discovered that there was writing across the palm of the hand.

He unfastened the cloth from the wire, and read aloud to the assembled citizens:

"I have dropped Fred and Lena from the Upper Air. They are slightly jolted, but safe and sound. Seek them not."

The white hand was passed from one to another until every man on the street had read these words.

Mr. Pump said, "The McNoir brothers must have slipped in last night to put this here."

"Why should they do so?" Jansen Moore objected.

Captain Slimm retorted peevishly, "Why has anything happened in this neighbor-

(Continued on page fourteen.)

FITS
EPILEPSY
OR FALLING SICKNESS
can be relieved, and quickly too. I have made the disease of Fits, Epilepsy or Falling Sickness a life-long study, and have hundreds of testimonials from persons who have used my remedy. Do not despair if others have failed. Send at once for treatise and a Free Bottle of my treatment. Give Express and P. O. address. W. H. Peeke, F. D., 4 Cedar St., New York.

KNIT WOOL SHAWLS FREE
BLACK, WHITE, RED.

We have made a contract with one of the big mills for a lot of woolen shawls.

We are going to give these shawls away to our readers.

The shawls are made of woolen yarn. They come in three colors—black, white and red. These shawls can be used in many ways, as the shoulder shawl, like that shown in the cut, and they can be used to throw over the head.

Probably nothing is so useful in the home as a shawl like this, just the thing for chilly weather, and cold winter evenings. It is very handy to throw on the head when you run into your neighbor's house.

These shawls are about 8 feet square. We want every reader of this paper to have a shawl, and in order that you may have one, we will send you one free, if you will fill out the coupon below, enclosing $1.25 for a year's subscription of this paper.

We send the shawl all charges prepaid. Be sure to state whether you want black, white or red, in the proper space below.

This is a splendid offer, and we are glad to be able to distribute these shawls among our readers. If you are already a subscriber, please say so when you write, and we will have your new subscription commence when the old subscription expires.

To The CHICAGO LEDGER: Enclosed please find $1.25 for which enter my subscription for one year and send me one (Color)........................Shawl, all charges prepaid. Send the paper until further notice to

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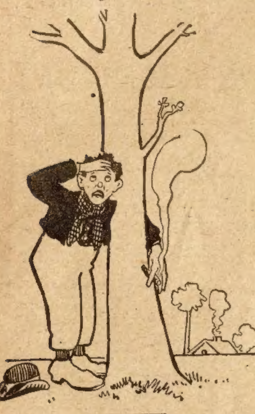
A Cigar Case.



The Eternal Feminine.

Mr. Pepprey—For goodness' sake, what's to prevent us going on a vacation?

Mrs. Pepprey—Well, there's the parrot. We can't take it along——

Mr. Pepprey—But Mrs. Nexdore says she'll be glad to keep it for us.

Mrs. Pepprey—I suppose so. She thinks it will tell her some of our family secrets.

TICKLISH

How George Won Out.

Together they were holding down the parlor sofa. He had just proposed and she was trying to discover just where she was at in the game.

"But I am not sure that I love you, George," she said softly. "I'm afraid it is only a sisterly affection that I feel——"

Just then her small brother bounded noisily into the room and interrupted her train of thought.

"Get out of here, you noisy boy," she shouted, and seizing him by the arm she rushed him through the door.

"Ah, no!" she sighed, as she resumed her place on the sofa. "My love for you, George, is not a sister's love. It is something several degrees sweeter, purer, higher and holier, and you may as well begin to save up money for the furniture at once, dear."

The Likeness.

"You know, your dog reminds me of some men."

"In what way?"

"In practically asserting that he can lick any man in sight and in continually giving tongue to his challenge."

One to Follow.

"I'll give you a good two-foot rule if you want it," said the painter.

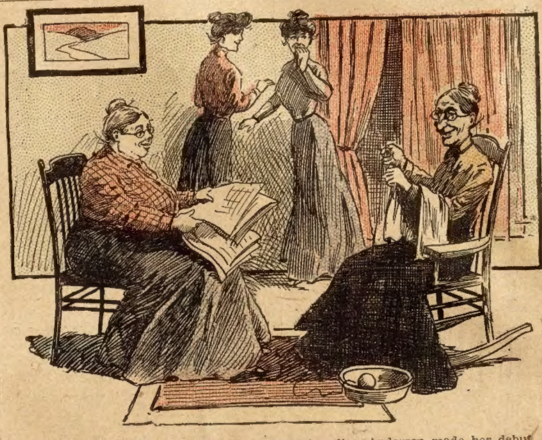
"Hand it over," rejoined the carpenter.

"Don't wear tight shoes," said the painter, with a large, open-face grin.

Changing Trades.

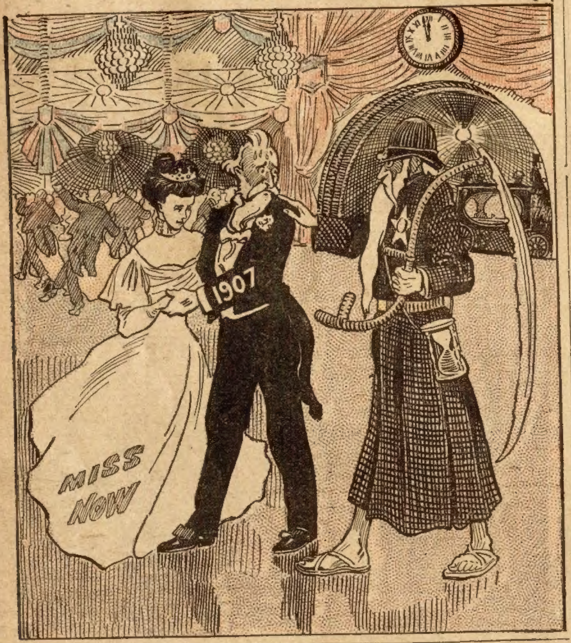
Visitor (at museum)—I want to see some of the mummies.

New Usher (formerly a dry-goods clerk)—Yes, madam; right this way; we have all the latest styles.



Mrs. Hodgekins—I see by the paper thet Angelina Anderson made her debut.
Mrs. Bodgekins—I could tell by lookin' at it she never bought it.

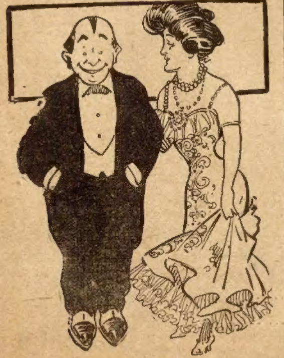
"BEG PARDON, SIR, YOUR CARRIAGE AWAITS."



Blissful Ignorance.

"What an intelligent looking dog that is of young Appleby's."

"Yes. It's funny young Appleby doesn't see the contrast."



He—What a lovely complexion Miss Pinkleigh has!
She—Yes. That girl's a born artist.

Or an Angel.

Small Boy—Say, mister, dere's a sign in yore winder readin' "Boy Wanted." Wot kind uv a boy does youse want?

Merchant—A nice quiet boy that doesn't use naughty words, smoke cigarettes, whistle around the office, play tricks or get into mischief——

Small Boy—Gwan! Youse don't want no boy; youse wants a girl. See?

Unlucky Bill.

"Yeas, pardner," drawled the lean native with the huge corncob, "Bill was the unluckiest man in seventeen States."

"Was eh?" answered the man who was painting signs on barns.

"Yes, sir. Why, when opportunity knocked at Bill's door he thought it was another bill collector and hid under the bed."

As the Years Go By.

The count had just filed his application for the hand of the millionaire's only daughter.

"Alas," sighed the old man, "things have changed since I was young. Folks used to wait fifty years for their golden wedding, but now they demand it at the start."

His Little Knock.

Mrs. Stubb (reading)—John, I see they have discovered a woman in the moon.

Mr. Stubb—I knew it would come sooner or later. The man had been enjoying undisturbed peace up there, but some woman was bound to butt in like they do down here on earth.

Removable.

The leading lady was blushing with pride. "There was such a nice old gentleman in the first box," she confided. "I heard him tell a friend that my beautiful golden hair reminded him of a golden star."

"And it reminds me of a star, sissy," replied the low comedian as he reached for the grease paint.

"Because it is so bright and golden?"

"No, because it comes out every night."

And she was so upset for the next few minutes she forgot her lines.

Strong Aroma.

The young man withdrew his arm and sniffed the air suspiciously.

"I beg your pardon, miss," he said in Greenland tones, "but er do you use tobacco?"

The beautiful girl stamped her foot with rage.

"No, no, Harold," she sobbed. "Nearsighted grandpa has cleaned his pipe with my hairpins again."

No Sense of Humor.

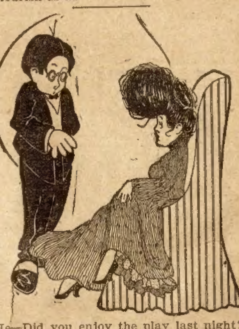
Untraveled Gothamite—Why is it that humorous papers are not a success in Chicago as well as in New York? Surely the Western people must have some sense of humor.

Traveled Gothamite—Not a particle. Why, I've seen Chicago people go off into the wilderness and stick up a sign "City Lots For Sale" without once smiling.

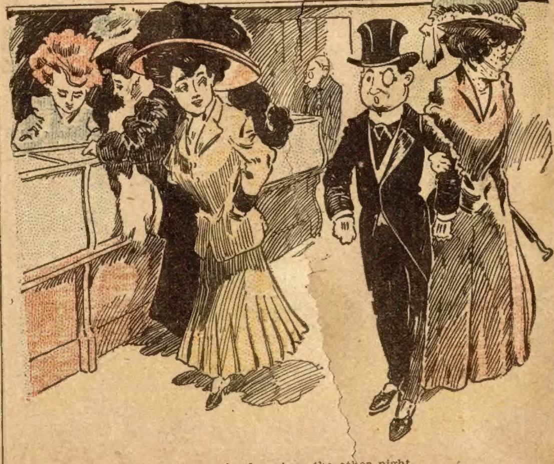
Wounded His Pride.

"Am I the first girl you ever kissed?"

"Really, Miss Jewel, did I go at it as amateurish as all that?"

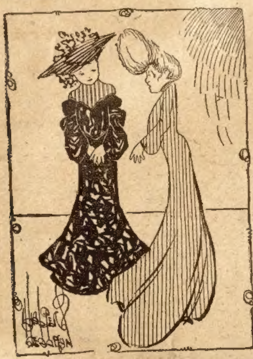


He—Did you enjoy the play last night?
She—Oh, yes, very much indeed! Charlie Dumley is such an entertaining conversationalist.



Miss Mocker—I saw them at the dog show the other night.
Miss Knocker—Yes; I think that's where she got him"

TACKLES



Madge—Do you dress according to the weather?

Majorie—How can you ask such a foolish question? You know I haven't more than a dozen gowns.

Might Be Serious.

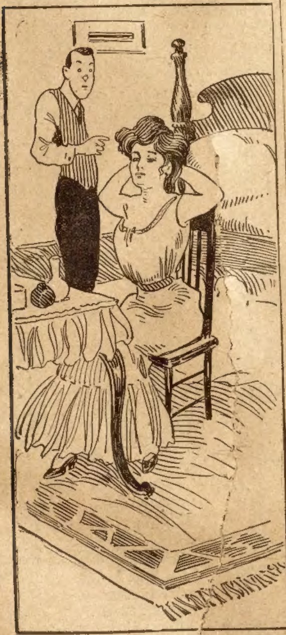
"Do your own dyeing," read the physician's wife. "That's a funny way to begin an advertisement."

"Here, let me see that," cried the husband in alarm. "Oh, it only refers to dyeing clothes. I was afraid it was some new scheme to do away with our profession."

Ladies, Preserve Your Youthful Appearance.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results.

Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.



Benham—I want to get up very early tomorrow morning.

Mrs. Benham—Shall I set the alarm clock?

Benham—I don't believe it will be necessary. I think it will answer the purpose if you call me when you get up to go through my pockets.

Indian Style.

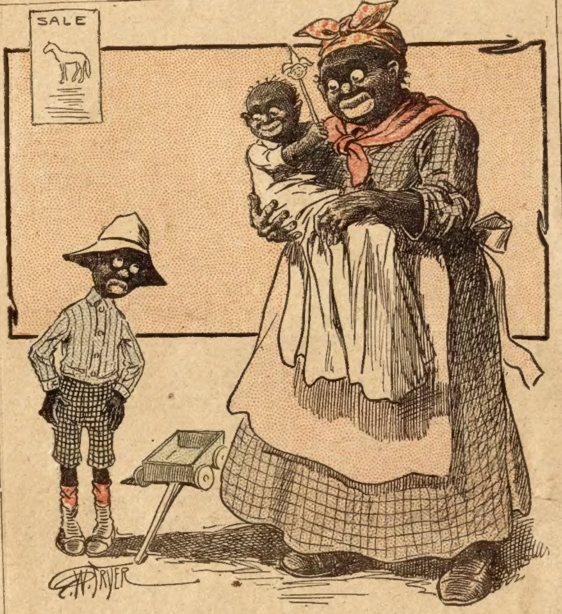
"Can you tell me where there is a good doctor?"

"Well, there is a dead one down in the next block."

She Knew.

"Aunt Julia," said small Tommy Toddles, who was reading the political news, "what are letters of acceptance?"

"Y, e, s," was was the significant reply.



"Maw, yo' said I'd be surprised what yo' give me for New Year's, and yo' didn't give me nuffin' at all."

"Well, chile, ain't you surprised?"

Not Particular.

"Does your clock keep good time?"

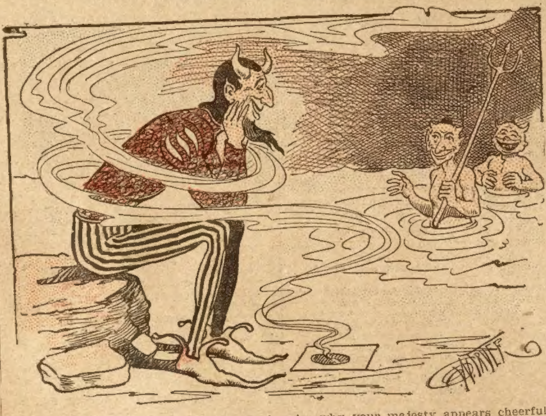
"Just any time that comes along, good or bad."

Not Expensive Enough to Be Ugly.

"Her hat does not become her at all."

"That is strange. She bought it at a reasonable price too."

CAUSE FOR MERRIMENT.



One of the Imps—May your servant inquire why your majesty appears cheerful?

His Satanic Majesty—Ha, ha! New Year's is with us. We'll get another section of that road paved.

In Other Words.

"You," hissed the heroine, "are a bow-wow in the feed box."

"What?" growled the villain.

"A dog in the manger," she hissed again.

"And you," snarled the villain, "are a crawler in the uncut."

"Come again," said the heroine.

"A snake in the grass," he snarled once more.

Cause of Defeat.

Helpful Wife—Why is it, my dear, that although you have so often been nominated for office, you have always been defeated?

Defeated Candidate (gloomily)—I have always run on taxpayers' tickets.

Knows He Can't Help It.

"Why does all the world love a lover?"

"It does not. It tolerates him."

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The Garrison Traitor;

Or, THE LIEUTENANT OF TROOP D

By WILLIAM H. MANNING

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Begun in No. 47, Nov. 23. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XIX.

STRANGE COMPANIONS.

Four riders were picking their way along a rough stretch of ground in El Loro foothills. They were Lieutenant Walton, Sergeant Flood, and Privates Draper and Gore, all of Troop D. Their horses showed signs of hard urging, but they were moving slowly enough now. No horse could move in that complication of rocks and ravines except with moderation.

When Lelia Gartley's pony had returned to Fort Ordway with turned saddle and dangling rein, Walton had hastened to the corral, taken out his steed, saddled and dashed away to investigate. In a remote, sandy ravine he found where, it was plain, the missing girl had been waylaid by three persons. The latter had been marked as white men, for their mounts had shod feet.

Various searching-parties had left the post, but when the Lieutenant found his comrades of Troop D with him he made no objection to their company, and all had gone together.

Ten miles they had followed the trail, the task often being one of difficulty, for rocky ledges and flinty soil troubled them, but they held to their task pertinaciously.

Walton knew they were getting deeper into El Loro all the while, and he remembered the shack where he had met Agatha, but he was to have more than bare suspicion to feed upon.

In a lonely arroyo Draper discovered something by the way, and, disentangling it from a point of rock, held it out on the muzzle of his carbine.

"Somebody's handkerchief!" he commented.

It was a generous-sized square of soiled white with blue dots, but these were not the only marks upon it. Dull red smears mottled it irregularly. All this the entire party saw, but to the Lieutenant it meant more.

His mind went back to the shack. It was just such a handkerchief that bandaged Len Crowell's head, and Walton felt sure the two were one, and that the red smears were blood from the wounded outlaw.

Here was further evidence that pointed straight to El Loro and Dan Marker's gang.

There were additional comments, in which the young officer took no part. Even to Major Hague he had never told all that he had seen in the foothills, and he did not care to be too communicative now. He bade Draper preserve the trophy, and that trooper thrust it into his pocket with a grimace.

"A bath wouldn't hurt it!" he muttered.

Progress was resumed, but Walton's face was gloomy. He saw the sun sinking lower and the shadows gathering, and trailing would be impossible after a short time.

Another mile and it was practically dark. Even keen-eyed Flood gave up detecting signs, and turned squarely to his superior.

"If we go on," said the Lieutenant, interpreting the look, "we may never recover the trail. On the other hand, inaction here may cost Miss Gartley dear."

"Yes, sir," replied the Sergeant..

"We will go on!"

"Just what I would advise," promptly answered Flood.

"It will be blind work. We don't know where to go. Sergeant, do you remember that, when we were scouting in El Loro, some months back, we saw the wickyups of an old Apache rancheria?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you find that place now?"

"I'm sorry, Lieutenant, but I should lie if I gave you hope of it. These hills are acknowledged as too much for ordinary men. Barrancas, arroyos, ravines, tables, miniature buttes and a general snarl make a labyrinth."

"It's the same with me, but there must be no delay. Follow!"

Through dips and over ridges, around pinnacles of stone and impediments of juniper and scrub oak, twisting, turning, now riding and then leading their horses, the troopers advanced. They went deep into El Loro, but they seemed to be the only persons there.

Presently they entered a valley where locomotion was easy. Walled by cliffs, the depression lay grassy and tree-dotted, with a stream winding gently through. For a time this meant nothing to Walton, but he finally reined in his horse abruptly.

He surveyed the north cliff sharply. Certain things that had at first impressed him grew more impressive as he gazed, and his face finally brightened.

He recognized the valley, and more.

Here, where the stream bent toward the uplift, outlaws had halted that their animals might drink, a few nights back, and on the cliff above he had lain and watched and listened.

He was just below the refuge to which Zadoc had conducted him.

Briefly telling Flood that he believed they were on the point of discoveries, he again led until the upper end of the valley was reached. There he ordered all to dismount.

"I am going on a scout," he stated. "I know in a measure where we are. Something may come of it. You will remain here and stand to horse, or, at least, not venture far away. Don't loosen the cinches, and don't let your mounts graze or crop. Check stamping, if you can, and see that they don't neigh."

Sergeant Flood saluted gravely.

"Look out for yourself, sir," he admonished. "It's a good place to get lost in here."

Walton made suitable reply, but he had no fear of getting lost as long as he did not go beyond the route he had marked out.

"Better take my carbine, sir," suggested Gore.

"I think my Colt will answer. I shall not be gone long."

Starting, the Lieutenant walked rapidly but alertly along the base of the cliff. He reached and passed the point where Zadoc had guided him on the first steps of the journey up the cliff, and then endeavored to back-track the journey of that night. Before long he had gained higher land and, recognizing certain features of the landscape, knew he was near the shack.

Pausing, he looked and listened freely. Silence was over the immediate locality. No man, nor animal nor bird was to be heard.

He renewed his way slowly and cautiously. A hundred yards he went, and then, as he rounded a pinnacle of rock, a light shone before him. A quick look he took, and then he knew that the shack was found. The light was there, streaming from a sashless window.

And the light was the only thing to suggest that life was there.

Walton walked forward and neared the shack. He saw that the door was closed. He advanced to that point, and, with his hand on the wall, listened. He heard no sound. The window remained for attention, and he decided to take a bold step and see what was within.

Moving as was necessary, he slowly raised his head and gazed over the lower impediment.

He saw Dan Marker and Len Crowell.

They were not the only occupants of the shanty. A third man was there, contrasting strikingly with them in all ways. He was clean, where they were dirt-begrimed, well dressed where they were ragged, and trimly groomed where they were unshorn and uncared for. This was something, but something else was much—so much that Walton was staggered almost as if by a blow.

The third man was Captain Amos Gartley of Troop D.

It was well that nobody glanced toward the window then. Walton was so amazed that he stared blankly and lost all thought of danger. His troop commander, supposed to be a couple of hundred miles away, was in El Loro hills, sitting at ease and smoking composedly.

Walton's mind became a race-course. Thoughts flashed through it as if sent by whip and spur, but all was confusion. Dumfounded, he could only realize the one amazing fact that Captain Gartley was there.

The silence continued, and the Lieutenant's head cleared suddenly. He had a new, impressive thought. Gartley was with the outlaws, and bearing himself like one on good terms. Why was he there? Was he with boon companions? Was there a second traitor in the garrison force?

It was not a friend of Amos Gartley that peered at him through the shack window. Walton was now ready to believe anything of him.

The Lieutenant shifted his gaze to Marker and Crowell. The fellows had a subdued air, but nothing could hide their stamp of villainy. Sneak and scoundrel were written large on their repulsive faces. Just now, they were not giving their attention to anything in particular, but sat with their regard bent on the earth-floor.

Again the Lieutenant's gaze strayed. In one corner, well away from all three men, a curtain of army blankets hung wide and limp. It was the corner where Walton had himself lain when wounded, and the curtain was the same that had shielded him from the outlaws' observation.

The sight awakened only passive interest, and he was about to give heed to the men again when his eyes became fixed in their attention. A hand had slightly parted the curtains, and it was the hand of a woman.

What was beyond he did not see. To him there was no more than darkness.

Quickly the curtains fell and the hand was no longer visible.

Walton remained looking. Somebody was within the niche back of the blankets, but who? Logic said it was Agatha, but, to the young officer, the hand had seemed strangely white for one much in open air.

The watcher breathed fast and hard. It was a time for strange suspicions. Again, who was there? The white hand was suggestive. Could it be that Lelia Gartley was there? If so, what was her position with her male companions? Two of them were desperadoes. Gartley was—if he was all that Walton suspected, was it certain that he was a friend of the girl?

Steps sounded heavily outside the shack and a man appeared from the shadows, hastening toward the door. Walton sank to the ground. The light streamed out and revealed the face of Pratt, sometime ambulance driver.

The Lieutenant was almost in his path. Discovery darkly threatened.

CHAPTER XX.

Pratt came on with long, quick steps. He had sharp eyes, but, as it happened, his mind was then too busy for him to favor his eyes. He passed within a yard of the crouching officer and saw nothing of him. His abstraction saved him from calamity, and possibly saved Walton from even greater trouble.

The ex-driver reached the door and entered. By that time the Lieutenant was on his feet and again watching and listening.

Captain Gartley, Marker and Crowell looked at Pratt as if his coming meant something of general interest.

He drew a sheet of white paper from his pocket and flourished it in the air. His manner was aggressive and stubborn.

"Here it is!" he exclaimed. "You shall hear it. First, as to how I got it. I'm a free rover, I be; and I'm one of many. Our band is a jolly crowd, and we live anywhere from Tierra Amarillo to the Sierra Hacheta. We live for gain; and the army, the cowboys, the freighters, the herders an' the miners furnish what we live on.

"Some time since we got word to waylay a Government convoy in the hills south'ard. We did it. I was along as driver of the ambulance of the escort-party, but that ain't here nor there. It was our game to make it seem the Apaches did the attackin', so some o' the lads rigged up in Tonto dress. That game failed because, just then, some o' the Tontos jumped their reservation, and there was a general fight, three-cornered: troopers, reds and us. Durin' shootin' I skipped, and I took this along."

Pratt held up the white paper.

"This is a letter. It was writ to our free-rider Captain by an officer at Fort Ordway. He gave it to another o' our lads, but he was shot plum' dead, and the letter fell into the hands of the Lieutenant who commanded the convoy. He read it. I stole it from him. Now I will read it."

With some difficulty Pratt read the letter. He brought out its contents clearly enough, making plain the two chief features of it—the first, that orders for the attack had come from an outsider; and the second, the definite statement that Captain Gartley had shot the father of Lieutenant Walton.

The reader had attentive listeners. Walton watched too, almost breathlessly. His gaze was fastened on Gartley's face. He found nothing to reward him. That face, schooled in years of active life, told no tale of guilt or innocence.

Gartley heard to the end, and then calmly flicked the ashes from his cigar.

"Awhile ago," he remarked, "you said that this was written by an army officer. I find no proof of it there. Let that pass. I will listen to all the evidence you have——"

"But your havin' killed Walton's father?"

The Captain smiled unconcernedly.

"I never knew his father; I never knew anybody named Walton until I met the Lieutenant when he came into my troop. Do you say that Walton read this?"

"He did; I seen him have it."

"He must have gained a very flattering opinion of me!" said Gartley, his smile deepening. "An interesting document. Still," he added, suddenly growing grave, "there are reasons why this letter might upset him not a little. Never mind; I can easily satisfy Lieutenant Walton. But, I want to get light on another subject. Let me be clear. Suddenly ordered back to my troop, I tried to get there by a short cut, having for companions my orderly and a guide. As I have already told you, I lost their company in the wild hills. I am satisfied that you know where they are. I shall be glad to hear."

"Don't you like this place?"

"I don't even know where I am."

"Didn't I find you and bring you in?" demanded Pratt.

"Granted! But where am I?"

"Ain't you been well used?"

"Yes."

"Then be satisfied. Never mind your orderly man, an' as for your guide——"

Pratt paused, smiled, and then abruptly added:

"Never mind! This letter goes first. My pards an' me want to know who that army officer is that is playin' into the hands of our free-rider Captain. Our Captain has gone off to one o' our camps nigh the Rio Pureco, an' we want to do some business on our own hook. Who is the army traitor?"

"I don't know of any?"

"Can't you guess at it?"

"I don't for a moment believe there is such a man."

"But this letter——"

"Does not say that the writer was an army man."

"Well, it's common talk that 'tis so, anyhow."

"Reports start up like toadstools, and then idle tongues boom the rumors. I will answer your question the best I can, however. If there is a traitor at the fort I don't know of it. Now, my own question, if you please. Where are my orderly and my guide?"

Dan Marker broke into an unmusical laugh.

"That guide, Cap'n, was one o' our free-riders, a real, genuine outlaw, ef you like the word better; and, having taken service with you, when he found you wantin' of a guide so bad, he decoyed you here. Your orderly—well, he ain't dead."

"Will you kindly bring him here?"

"Frankly, Cap, I won't!"

"Why not?"

"It's this way. Our outlaw leader—I needn't mention his name, for nobody 'round here knows or has met him, and it don't count—has gone to a place in the Bernalillo region, so we humble chaps are goin' to stalk a little game on our own hook. We've decoyed you here for ransom!"

"Ransom?"

"Sure! That's what our round-up means. Ransom!"

Captain Gartley smiled in a very calm manner.

"When you get ransom for me you will be rich."

"How much will you give?"

"Not one cent!"

"For yourself?"

"I don't understand. Who else figures?"

"Lelia Gartley, your daughter!"

"When you have her it will be time enough to talk about that," responded Gartley unconcernedly.

"Cap'n, get your shedwater ready. The deluge is comin'!"

Marker rose and stepped briskly across the floor. He, Pratt and Crowell were smiling broadly, evidently feeling well satisfied with the situation and themselves. Straight to the farther corner Dan walked, and then he laid hold of the blankets and jerked them apart. The interior of the curtained space was revealed.

Everybody looked. Then the smiles faded from the faces of the outlaws. Roscoe Walton, standing at the window, was astonished.

The recess was vacant.

"Friends alive!" gasped Marker, "there's been treachery here!"

Whatever had been there, the owner of the white hand was not to be seen.

A shot sounded outside the shack. A cry followed; then two more shots came almost in unison.

Walton bestirred himself, grasped his Colt the tighter and ran around the corner. He saw men there, a dozen in number. They were in confusion, running to and fro as if at a loss what to do. The Lieutenant looked in vain for feminine drapery. Logical reason he could not have given, but he associated the owner of the white hand with this disturbance.

Fearful that harm would come to those who deserved better, he ran toward the group, regardless of danger. He tripped over the body of a prostrate man, fell, and was seized in a tenacious grasp. A struggle followed, but he finally over-mastered the unknown and rose to his feet.

The surrounding space seemed to be full of men, and he saw weapons bristling wherever men moved or stood.

Now, dull sounds came from the shack, and he suspected that Captain Gartley was in trouble. Wheeling, he dashed to the front, arriving just as Gartley staggered out with Marker and Crowell hanging to him like bulldogs to their prey. The Captain was big and strong, but he could not shake off that burden.

Walton saw something more ominous. Back of the fighting trio was Pratt, holding out a revolver with which he tried to get a shot at the troop-commander without endangering his own allies. Murder was in the fellow's eyes, face and attitude.

Walton presented his Colt, pulling the trigger quickly. There was a flash and a report and Pratt dropped and lay still. Never again, with treachery in his heart, would he drive an army ambulance.

He had hardly touched the floor when Walton plunged at Marker and Crowell. Of necessity they loosened their hold on Gartley, and that officer rallied and sent out lusty blows. Affairs were going hard with the outlaws, but help came at the critical moment.

Other burly men fell upon the army's representatives with staggering blows.

Then sounded a cheer. It was of one voice only, but it was a stout and defiant yell, and Walton, catching a side-glance, saw Sergeant Flood belaboring without mercy.

For a time the tide flowed evenly, but the advantage of weapons was with Walton and his comrades. With Crowell and another man down, heart deserted the outlaws.

Led by Marker, they took to flight.

Martin Flood clicked his heels together and saluted ceremoniously, albeit with unusual celerity.

"If the Captain and the Lieutenant please," he said, every inch the soldier even in this crisis, "I would suggest that we go."

"But Miss Gartley—she may be here——"

Thus Walton began, but the Sergeant swept a look at their rocky environment. It was clear that he realized the danger.

"Begging pardon, sir, but the lady is safe," he declared. "Met her and another girl and a man over yonder. They gave the alarm and I came here. They are back there."

"Lead on, then! Captain, pardon me, but it may be well if I take command for a time."

"Give your orders, Walton. I, too, will obey."

Flood was marching stiffly, but rapidly off, and they kept close behind him. Gartley asked one or two questions, but even he knew that they walked on the brink of a volcano, and that the smouldering fire might at any moment break forth.

Presently the Sergeant spoke again.

"Draper, Gore and I were where you left us, sir," he explained, "when a man called Zadoc came and besought our advance this way. Said you and some girls, including Miss Gartley, were in peril. The two ladies passed me a bit ago. They are now here with Draper and Gore——"

Flood halted and ceased to speak. He had passed an upshoot of rock, behind which was an open space. He looked to the right and left.

"They're gone!" he ejaculated, his manner showing agitation.

"They?" repeated Walton. "Do you mean Miss Gartley?"

"Yes, sir; she and the others. They should be here. Something has happened. They are gone!"

CHAPTER XXI.

AT THE FINISH.

Morning broke dull, gray, sky-clouded and somber. Shadows hung over El Loro, but not densely enough to obscure the vision. At one point a valley broke the sameness of the barren hills. Grass covered its bottom nearly in full, a stream flowed lazily along through the green carpet, and cottonwoods and willows dotted the margins. On either side rose steep cliffs.

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Nature had done much to make it a spot of peace, but, that morning, man was opposing his wayward will to nature and was responsible for a reign of noise and violence. Across the valley bullets sped, at intervals, invisible but venomous, and seeking human life. At the southern side men hid behind rocks. Half way up the cliff to the north other men crouched behind similar cover.

A duel was on, and there was no mercy in the firing.

It was a time recalling old Indian battles, for even as these were waged, so fought the two white parties. The showing of a head might be fatal, so it was the purpose of each man to keep as much in cover as possible and himself seek for a target.

The party half way up the cliff was Captain Gartley, Lieutenant Walton, Sergeant Flood, Zadoc and two young women. The latter were Lelia and Agatha.

When search failed to reveal the girls the previous night, Walton had remembered the cliff refuge where he had once been taken by Zadoc. Now, going there as a last resort, Zadoc and the girls had been found. And there they had been located by the outlaws, and there besieged. Open attack would have been deadly to the assailants, but the opposite side of the valley offered a standpoint, and there the free-lance had taken position.

Of Draper and Gore nothing was known by their friends.

Lelia's story had been thrilling. Riding in the hills she had been seized by Marker and his boon companions, and then taken to their retreat. When they also gained practical possession of Gartley they had planned a surprise for him. Keeping up a show of good will, he had been led to Marker's shack. Previously, Lelia had been placed on the couch in the corner, bound and gagged.

Right there Agatha came into the scene. After Walton had been in the structure, on the former occasion, Zadoc, seeing the possibility of trouble for Agatha in the future, had dug a yard-long subway under the foundation by which she could secretly enter or leave the shack. Well hidden, it had escaped notice, and it was by means of this she had taken Lelia from the place.

Attacked on the way from the vicinity, Gore and Draper had remained to cover their retreat, while Zadoc led the girls to the cliff refuge. The two troopers had disappeared.

Morning saw the duel begin, and it was still raging hotly. Gartley and his Lieutenant were lying hard by each other when the Captain had a sudden thought.

"Walton," he said quietly, "did you hear that letter read in the outlaws' shack?"

The Lieutenant looked straight ahead at the opposite cliff, but promptly responded:

"I did, sir."

"Do you remember that the letter charged me with having killed a man?—and that man, your father?"

"I remember it, Captain."

"To me, it seems superfluous to deny the charge, and I have been your troop-captain long enough so that I think you cannot seriously believe it; but I want to set all doubts at rest. Did your father die a death otherwise than natural?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know who killed him?"

"I do not. At least, there is nothing clear."

"When and where did he die?"

"In Londway, Illinois, when I was a boy."

"I was never in the State of Illinois until sixteen years ago, and I never knew anybody named Walton until I met you, after you came to my company. Later, I will have exact dates from you, but I know your age well enough so I can assert that I was in New York, and nowhere else, at the time you mention. Let this rest for now, but I shall insist on furnishing absolute proof later. Let us drop it for now."

This conversation was held with rifles cracking on the farther cliff, and carbines spitefully returning lead from their own refuge. Bullets pattered all around them.

Walton faced grimly to the front. His mind was in a whirl of emotion. The declaration of his superior carried conviction. Suspicion and bitterness slowly retreated from his mind, and better thoughts came as tenants. When he could think more clearly he looked back.

Lelia was there!

And dull as was the morning, sunshine seemed to hover where she was.

She was no longer inaccessible. The shadow of blood was not between them.

Captain Gartley was giving close attention to the enemy across the valley. He eyed that point with the judgment of one one schooled in adventure.

"Sergeant Flood!" he called quietly.

"Sir?" promptly returned the man in the chevrons.

"You were last with Draper and Gore. Had they orders what to do in a pinch?"

"I gave none, sir."

"Both are to be trusted fully, if alive. There is the rub. What is your opinion?"

"Man is mortal, sir. Still, I don't think either fellow will fail to report later. Trust them troopers, sir. I reckon the Lieutenant will back me up in that."

"If alive, Draper and Gore may be trusted to do their duty, Captain. This is not a hopeless siege."

"The lack of food will tell on us ultimately, and the capacity of the olla is not boundless. I wish—"

Splintered stone suddenly flew widely from a chance bullet, and the Captain did not finish his sentence. Firing increased in the enemy's quarter. Bullets pattered freely, and some came too near human flesh for safety. Walton looked at Lelia and Agatha with concern. The direct flight of hostile lead could not touch them, but the glance from impact was to be dreaded.

The young officer checked a sigh. Other searchers had been sent out when Lelia's horse came riderlesss to post. Where were they now? Had zeal slackened at Fort Ordway?

Another half hour. Walton was scanning the nearer uplifts across the valley. Something unusual caught his attention. A flash of dark, and then vacancy where dark had been. But another flash of dark, and yet another, and another. The Lieutenant seized Martin Flood's arm and spoke a word. The battle-scarred veteran looked with unblinking eyes.

"More men!" spoke Walton softly. "Friend or foe?"

"Lieutenant," was the even response, "my guess is you'll find coats and carbines where them dots flit!"

A few minutes more of suspense, and then the crash came. Yells sounded over the way, and presently ringing cheers. Carbine and rifle mingled their notes viciously. The outlaws were seen to be in rapid flight. Aid had come.

Another half hour and two parties met in the valley. The first had lately descended from the refuge in the cliff. The second, and it counted full fifty men, came with Captain Kayne, Lieutenant Orwell and Private Draper at its front. The latter hung low in saddle and now and then swayed, but he struggled against physical weakness and tried to hide his weariness. His left arm was in a sling.

At the alarm, the night before, he had ridden to the post for help and it was come.

Greetings had mainly been completed, and Walton was standing with the two young women. Orwell approached, went straight to Agatha, took her hand and then kissed her on the lips. She did not demur, but bent a return look upon him that was eloquent. Orwell faced Agatha and Walton, but it was at the latter he directed his [illegible] now.

"I take this occasion," he said, with simple, manly directness, "to say that this lady is my promised wife. She will honor me by taking me for her husband when we see the post-chaplain!"

Lelia, filled with a feminine flutter, embraced Agatha impulsively. Orwell led his fellow lieutenant aside.

"Walton," he said, "I once mystified you a good deal. Let me confess, now, that I was really outside the post that night when you practically caught me at it. But, sir, I did not talk with other men as you judged from the trail: My tracks crossed theirs. That's all as to that. Ignoring military orders, I came to see Agatha secretly. She is stepdaughter of Dan Marker—not his child, you will see—but she is all gold. For her sake I shall be a better man. I have been frivolous, I have gambled, and I've wrenched the ethics of the army that call for absolutely veracity by telling some yarns that were so dark-gray that they were blood relatives to black lies. That's done with. I have Agatha's influence to thank for my reformation. Walton, maybe you have thought me a mighty poor stick. Have you faith to believe I shall reform?"

With these words Orwell looked his fellow lieutenant in the eyes. Walton saw, studied for an instant, and then, glancing at Agatha, held out his hand. Two military palms met in a firm grasp.

Orwell stood largely cleared, and a hopeful subject for cleansing.

The rescuers roved all over the outlaws' stamping-ground. Marker, Pratt and Crowell were found among the fallen. The surviving free-riders had gone in headlong flight.

About mid-day the soldiers rode toward the post. With them went the two girls and Zadoc. The latter, a drudge of the gang, but a faithful friend of Agatha, was glad to go where she went. His mental abilities, though ample in some ways, were dwarfed in others. He was to have a home where she found hers.

Captain Gartley's orderly, freed from brief captivity, was also with them. His safety was due to Trooper Gore's bravery and shrewdness.

Two hours after Fort Ordway was reached, somewhat of a sensation was caused by the arrest of Private Bannister, charged with giving information to the free-riders, and especially with causing the attack on Walton's escort-party on the occasion when he was convoying Mr. Pell and Lelia.

Shortly after, Walton was summoned to the Major's private office. Besides the Adjutant, Sergeant Roper was also there, bright-eyed and alert, albeit as respectful as usual.

"Lieutenant," said the commanding officer, "the garrison traitor is found. When you reported that a dying outlaw had stated that the traitor was an officer here, I doubted the whole thing. Soon after, another matter made me change my mind in part. As you were ill, I put Sergeant Roper to investigating secretly. He has solved the mystery. The traitor was no officer, but was Bannister. He has been carrying tales to the outlaws, and, of course, sharing in their plunder."

Details were given, but Walton, watching Roper, suspected that the subordinate had something more to say. When they left the office, he opened the subject.

"Sergeant, was it all chance that, when I came in, bound to my horse and unconscious, I was first seen by Bannister?"

Roper saluted formally.

"Sir," he returned, "there was no chance in it. I'll say, firstly, Bannister was a man who would let anybody pass his post if paid to do it. Lieutenant Orwell bribed him, and so did others before I knew he was the traitor. Now, as to that night adventure. When you rode in the hills somebody threw a blanket into the face of your horse, causing him to shy and pitch you off. It was a bad throw, and it made you insensible."

"Yes."

"I was the man who flung the blanket. I was scouting by Major Hague's orders. Seen by the outlaws, I had to ride for it. You know the rest, and I only need to add that I did not recognize you until just as you toppled from your mount. Sir, I had a bad scare then!"

"You then brought me to the post?"

"Yes. The outlaws had given up pursuit. My task was easy. But I didn't want it known I had been out. Bannister and I were to go on with the third relief. Relying on the proximity of the horses in the corral to hold the mount you was on, I led him nigh. It worked well. When Bannister took his post he saw you, you know."

Roper looked around, lowered his voice and hastily added:

"Sir, Bannister is a man who babbles in his cups. He started that yarn that Miss Lelia was not Captain Gartley's daughter, but others boomed it."

Walton nodded. He remembered the exaggerated claims of the dying outlaw from whom he had his own first information, and the story of disgrace and other things. Clearly, the story had been "boomed."

"I reckon," pursued Roper, "that Bannister, when drunk, told me more than he told anybody else. Here is one thing, such as 'tis. He said his real name was Doane. Upwards of twenty years ago he was servant for a man named Moses Leighton, and in the town of Londway, Illinois. Leighton, a reckless, treacherous fellow, fought a duel with a man named Jasper Walton, and, firing prematurely, killed his adversary. Bannister said that man was your father. Leighton has long been dead. When serving on the Platte, Bannister saw Miss Lelia, he believed he saw a resemblance in her to Leighton. He was a fanciful man, and he planned to trade on that resemblance and make money for himself. It was all a blind game by a knave, for he once admitted to me that he hadn't a grain of reason to connect her with Leighton."

Ten minutes later Walton returned to Major Hague's office.

"Pardon me, sir," he said, "but have you a speciman of the penmanship of Private Bannister?"

The commanding officer looked at him keenly, and then laid certain papers on the desk.

"Here," he replied, "are three sutler's checks signed by Bannister. Here," he added quickly, "is something more."

Walton looked. Before him lay the letter he had acquired in the hills, only to have it stolen by Pratt; the same letter the latter had read to Captain Gartley in the shack. The writing was Bannister's.

Bannister was never court-martialled. A fire broke out one night in the quarter-

(Continued on page fourteen.)

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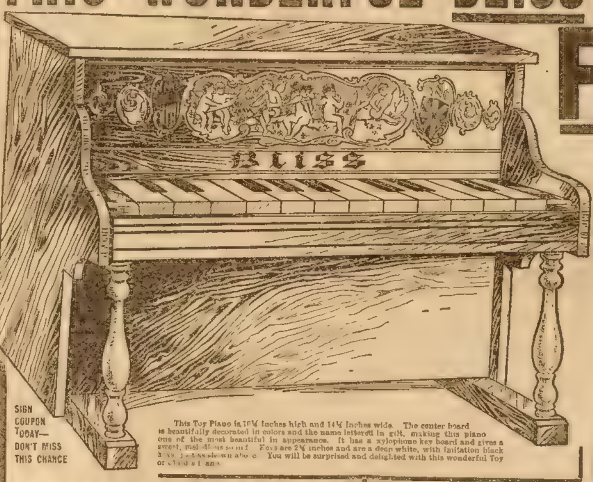

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The Rogues of Rogue River

By J. M. MERRILL

Author of "False to His Trust," "Son of a Soldier," etc.

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CHAPTER IV.

A VICTORIOUS ENEMY.

Contrad and Simon were left in command of the boom.

Everything was quiet after the departure of the crew from town. Contrad paced about the boom in an uneasy manner for some time. Simon lit his pipe and smoked.

"We ought to be armed," he said.

"Do you think there is any real danger?" asked the foreman.

"If you'd been here a while ago you'd thought so, old man."

"That was a beastly trick. Do you think Sam was into it?"

"I know he was. I heard his name called——"

"But there's more Sams than one on Rogue River."

"I saw him—'twas our Sam, Preacher Dallard's son. I kin swear to it."

Simon puffed in silence after that.

Contrad, who had seated himself, gave a quick start and sprang upright.

"What was that?"

"I didn't hear anything," said Simon, removing his pipe.

The foreman cocked his head and listened. A faint, low song mingled with water came from up the stream.

"Sounds like a saw," uttered Simon, dropping his pipe and rising.

"It is a saw! They are cutting the wing boom!"

With this ejaculation Cool Contrad sprang away as if for life. Simon followed at a slower gait. He was quick to apprehend danger since the explosion. His senses were not as keen, however, as Contrad's. The latter had been a trusted employe of the elder Ruddiford, and he was equally trusted by the son.

"Blame my skin!" ejaculated Bob Simon, "if that are Cool Contrad ain't a race-hoss then what is he?" He saw the foreman disappearing up the river, bounding over the imprisoned logs like a rubber ball.

Soon there came a shout and sounds of a scuffle. Simon caught sight of a limb lying across some logs. He snatched this and ran faster.

A splash and cry of dismay greeted his ears.

Two men were in the act of removing a saw from the now cracking timber as Simon dashed up. Two others were floundering in the water.

There was a crash and a roar. The wing boom had given way, pushed down the stream by a mass of sawlogs. Simon swung his club high. One of the men felt its force and was knocked senseless. The other dashed for the shore, bearing his saw.

Simon turned his attention to the man he had felled. The logs were moving in a mass. Bob seized the prostrate incendiary, flung him across his shoulder, and scrambled for the shore. He reached it with a lamed ankle and smarting hands.

A grinding roar filled his ears. Panting like a winded hound, Bob Simon dropped his burden and faced the wildest scene he had yet witnessed.

It was a grand sight. Fully one-third of the magnificent boomage of logs went swirling, tumbling and tossing down the stream. It was this move of giant forces that startled Ross and his men at the Widow Golding's door.

Simon stood in awed silence. He felt himself safe, but his employer's property was going to destruction. The man felt the loss keenly. To be sure Contrad was his superior, and he had failed to prevent the disaster. Bob had been placed on guard by Ross Ruddiford, however, and he felt that he had failed to meet the heir's expectancy.

A stir at the man's feet caused him to bend down.

"Say, are you bad hurt, old man?" asked Simon.

The one addressed sat up groaning and rubbing his head.

"I'm glad you ain't killed," said the watchman, "though I allow you deserve all you got."

"And I allow that you are a ruffian and a fool!"

The victim of Bob's club rose to his feet. He seemed a bit unsteady, and would have fallen had not Simon caught and steadied him. And then the boom-watcher uttered a surprised cry.

"So it's you, Sam Dallard!" exclaimed Simon.

"Yes," faintly. "You've about killed me, Bob."

"Served you right if I'd quite did the job, Sam," was the uncivil retort. "You have been doing dirty work tonight, my boy. I reckon you'll do well if you keep out of prison. Look out yonder!"

A bony hand pointed at the rushing logs as they shot through the break.

"It's shameful——"

The youth pulled away from his captor. He seemed anxious to hide his identity from the bluff logger.

"You can't go yet, my boy," growled old Simon, holding fast to the arm of the other. "I've heard yer dad preach charity and good deeds from the pulpit many a time. While he was doing it he had a boy running wild amongst the evil dens of Rogue River. By hokey, lad, this stream is well named, fur there's more rogues to the mile than anywhere in Michigan. Wait. I ain't done. You have showed your hand, and got caught. Now tell me what you mean by helping them Delata cusses. Speak quick——"

"I never helped them."

"Don't lie, it ain't going to help you now."

"I am not lying, Bob——"

A savage shake cut short the words. Dallard stood a weak child in the strong clutch of his captor.

"I'm going to deliver you up to justice. D'ye hear me, Sam?"

"Don't be a fool, Bob. I can explain."

"Out with it then."

"Not to you, Bob Simon."

The tall, slender youth jerked away and fell headlong. He did not move. Bob bent down and looked into the upturned face. It was white and stained with blood. A wild fear struck the soul of the watcher. Perhaps the boy was dead. It was a terrible thought. His hands were cold; his face was like ashes.

It was the effect of the blow.

"Look up, Sam!" cried old Bob. "Don't stare that way. You ain't dead—no, no, you can't be! I didn't mean to do this, oh heaven, I didn't!"

Being assured of the boy's death Bob stood up, trembling like a leaf.

What were the moving logs to the man now? He was marked as was Cain of old. It was a fearful thought. Drops of sweat stood out on the swart face of the old boom-watcher.

Voices and footsteps were heard from down the stream.

Turning, old Bob staggered away. Soon he met Ross Rudddiford and several of the Hilltop crew.

"Is this the way you guard my property, Bob Simon?" demanded Ross angrily.

"I couldn't help it——"

"No excuses, man," snapped the angry heir of Hilltop. "You let the enmy overcome you twice this night. That's enough. I half believe you are in league with them."

"Oh, Ross—Mr. Ruddiford, let me explain——"

"I'll hear nothing from you now. Half my logs are gone, the rest may soon follow, a cool hundred thousand gone to destruction. Some one shall suffer for this. Where is Contrad?"

"Don't know. Oh, Ross—Mr. Ruddiford," cried Simon, "there's been awful things happened tonight."

"That's true ——"

"Contrad and me had a fight wit' the outlaws, but it was too late to save the wing boom. I am thankful it wasn't the main one. If 't had been, all your logs would have been lost instead of a part. Contrad tackled the rascals and fell into the water clinchin' one of 'em. He may be drowned; hain't seen him since."

Ross was very friendly toward Contrad. The latter had been like a father to him since his parent died, and Mrs. Contrad, a very pretty and worthy woman, acted as mistress of Hilltop, with several servants at her command. As for a mother, Ross had no memory of ever having one.

What Simon said was of a startling nature. Despite his great loss, Ross Ruddiford placed human life above mere property.

"Scatter, men, and look for Contrad," he cried.

Bob Simon alone remained.

"Why don't you bestir yourself, Bob?" cried the heir of Hilltop, harshly.

"'Cause I've something to tell you, Ross."

"What is it?"

"It's about the leader of this gang of outlaws, Ross. Mebbe you'll be surprised when I tell you it was the preacher's son Sam."

"I am surprised at nothing these times," returned the tall boy of Hilltop. "I always distrusted Sam, he was so preachy and good. It'll take the father down a peg when he finds Sam in limbo. The old chap roasted me once for hooking a few melons. I never forgot," and Ross Ruddiford laughed rather hoarsely.

"And he is dead, Ross."

"What! Who is dead? Not the preacher?"

"No, but Sam. Come quick and look at him. He lies out here."

The stout watchman turned and walked bulkily away. His employer followed. There was something confusing in what Simon had said, and Ross walked on, in a half-hearted manner. Presently Big Bob halted and threw up his hands.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, "the dead has come to life and run away!"

The starlight revealed an empty spot where Sam Dallard had lately lain.

CHAPTER V.

SAM DALLARD DEFIES HIS ENEMIES.

Sam Dallard had fallen in a faint, simulating death. It had all come from the blow Bob Simon had given him with the club.

Soon after the departure of the burly watchman the boy revived. His head was not clear, nor were his senses quite with him. Nevertheless he got upon his feet and staggered into the woods.

This had been a night of alarm and strenuous doings of which the parson's son had had his full share. The boy scarcely knew which way his footsteps tended. He cared only to place distance between himself and the men at the boom grounds.

The starlight filtered through the upper foliage occasionally. Sam found himself in a well defined path which he followed till he came into the open. The wind blew up from a long stretch of river. This refreshed the dizzied brain of the boy.

He saw a light in the distance. This came from Hilltop mansion.

"Great uproar tonight," muttered Sam as he reeled and stumbled along.

He brought up at the Ruddiford gate against which some one leaned—a girl in gray skirt, with a fascinator drawn over her head.

"That you, Ross?"

"Hello! Nell!" exclaimed the parson's son, straightening himself with difficulty. "So you are up at this time of night, and watching for the high and mighty Mr. Ruddiford. D'ye know what's happened, miss?"

"No I don't——"

"A heap of villainy, let me tell you, Miss Contrad."

"With you into it deeper than any one," said the girl with a shrill laugh.

"I've put a finger in of course," admitted the parson's son. "Haven't I as much right as anybody, Miss Nell?"

Sam was at the gate now, and laid a hand on the girl's shoulder. She shrugged and pushed the hand aside. This brought a laugh from the other.

"You're mad 'cause 'twasn't Ross," he said.

"I am disgusted with your antics, Sam Dallard—"

"Whoop-de-do! Now hear that! Antics. Well, let me tell you, miss—"

"Tell me nothing. I don't wish to hear a thing. Did you come from up yonder? I hear a roaring sound as if a million logs

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Cut—5.

were dashing down the Rogue. What does it mean?"

"It means that Ross Ruddiford is poorer by ten thousand dollars than he was at nightfall," responded Sam in a serious tone. "The boom has been cut and a lot of his logs are adrift."

"Scandalous!"

"Like enough."

"It is perfectly wicked—"

"Now see here, Nell, let me tell you something."

"I've been waiting for that for a long time, Sam Dallard."

"Waiting for what?"

"For you to tell me something sensible."

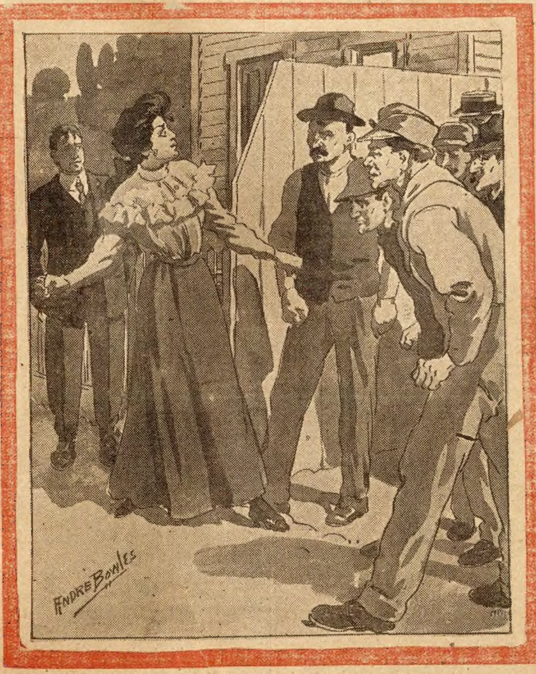
The girl laughed shrilly. Her voice was husky and unnatural.

"Nell Contrad, you are out of sorts tonight and I don't wonder at it," said he in a low voice, leaning gently toward her. "There's been enough devilment going on lately to make a preacher swear. This mess about navigating the river has spoilt more natures, and put more fellows by the ears than anything else that ever happened on the river. Now, if I was a Deltan I'd do just what Marand is doing, insist on the channel being kept open."

"Oh, would you?" cried the girl with a sudden eager feeling.

"Of course I would. Ross is a good fellow all right, but he has his failings, and one of them is a big lot of self-importance. He got that from his mother, I reckon, the old man had very little of it. A little wealth often makes fools of very sensible fellows, Nell; especially if that wealth drops on a chap suddenly and that chap happens to be only a boy."

She breathed softly, tremulously. He was uttering her own thoughts. She had seen the effect of much money on the boy Ross. He had assumed the air of a man, and had become quite self centered as well as lofty in his ideas. Nell, who had known Ross for years, had come in for his condescension and this nettled her.



"You must not hurt Sam!"

"You've sized him up about right, Sam," said she.

"Of course I have. If Ross would only come off his high horse and treat Rod Marand as an equal, reasoning the case with him, there'd be no trouble. He'll never do this though, and that's what is going to lead to no end of a racket."

"It has led to much already. I don't think Marand did right to send men to blow up the boom-house and destroy property and maybe lives. That is awful wicked, Sam, too wicked for anything. If it can be proved against the owner of The Happy Hand, he will go to prison."

She spoke feelingly for one of her years—she was not yet sixteen.

"That's all true enough, but Rodney hasn't done anything of the kind."

"Why do you think that? Ross has had two letters from him, demanding things, and making threats. I'm afraid The Happy Hand's captain has got into deep water as they say. I always liked Rodney, too, but—"

"No use speculating," broke in the boy hotly. "I know a thing or two. There's wrong on both sides; there's got to be a compromise such as saved the nation in the days of Daniel Webster."

"But Ross Ruddiford will never agree to that."

"He is stiff-necked I know, but he'll have to come to it in the end."

"I'm afraid not after tonight," sighed the girl. "It is terrible. What have they been donig up yonder? Are all the logs lost?"

"No. It was the shire-boom and not the main one that was cut. About a third of the logs are loose. Somebody has been foolish."

"Worse than that, Sam. Some one has been wicked and criminal. I am sorry it has happened this way. Papa and Ross will be more determined than ever now."

"It's cold," said the boy, shrugging his shoulders. "Better run in and get to bed before you catch your death of cold, Nell. These April nights are worse than winter."

"I shan't be able to sleep till papa comes," said she.

"Well, he's coming now, so good night, Nelly Bly."

He tossed the girl a kiss across the gate and turned to go.

The sound of tramping feet was heard. The men of Hilltop were returning. Too well Sam Dallard knew what it meant to be caught now. The denunciatory remarks of Nell Contrad against the boom-cutters may have hurt. If so the parson's son did not show it.

The starlight revealed a score of dark forms coming across the open.

When Sam Dallard started to walk away a sudden faintness seized him. His head grew light and he feared he was going to fall. He staggered and caught at the fence, thus steadying himself.

On the instant a dozen millmen came up. Sam had come back to the fence several rods from the gate. He was not seen at first. Contrad and Ross were talking with Nell.

The dizzy boy heard them distinctly.

"I tell you, it was a dirty piece of business."

It was Contrad speaking. Sam clinched the fence to save himself from going down. His senses, though benumbed, were not quite lost.

"The worst part of it is that one of Logdale's citizens was into it."

This from Ross Ruddiford.

Sam bit into his lip to keep from crying out. His strained senses caught the voices again, harsh and bitter in sound.

"Well," broke in a girl's voice. "I don't care, you are some to blame, Ross Ruddiford. I don't uphold this night's work, but you might have seen Rodney and talked it over—"

"Talk nothing over," broke in the heir of Hilltop angrily. "I'd see him in the lake first. But Rod ain't so bad as the villains who lent themselves to the destruction of my property tonight. To think that one of my supposed friends should be the leader in such work! One that I trusted as a brother; one who was a schoolmate of mine at Delta high school. Well, that gets me."

"And me, too," growled Cool Contrad, who had escaped from his river bath in a somewhat forlorn condition. Wet to the skin, he pressed through the gate and ordered his daughter to retire to her room.

She still stood facing Ross, however. There was something in his words that aroused curiosity, if not concern in her heart.

"What do you mean, Ross?" she finally asked.

"The fellow who led the incendiaries tonight was Parson Dallard's son."

"What! Not Sam?"

There was a shocked intonation to the voice questioning Ruddiford.

"Yes, Sam Ballard," asserted Ruddiford coolly. "He has turned against his friends. He has laid himself open to arrest and imprisonment. He cannot clear his skirts. Your father as well as Bob Simon caught him in the act. The preacher's son shall wear prison stripes before the month is out!"

"Oh, I cannot believe it!" moaned Nell.

"No, you must not believe it for it is a blamed lie!" and confronting them all was Sam Dallard himself.

"The incendiary!" cried Ruddiford. "Seize him, men! He must not be permitted to escape!"

A dozen hands were thrust forth to grasp the young outlaw.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE BASEMENT.

"Stand back," ordered the suspected incendiary. "I will not be put upon by you fellows. Stand back, I say," and with a quick push the speaker sent one of the men headlong. "I haven't done anything to be ashamed of——"

"Shut his mouth! Knock him down, the infernal anarchist!" yelled a voice.

Nell Contrad had by this time opened the gate and pushed her slender form in front of the accused.

"Get away, Nell. What are you about?" demanded the heir of Hilltop, angrily. He placed a hand on the shoulder of the pretty girl.

"You must not hurt Sam," said she quickly. "If he has done anything——"

"Done anything!" ejaculated Ruddiford, angrily. "He's the leader of the gang that blew up the boom-house. He——"

The crowd was pressing closer, and pretty Nell gasped for breath.

"Back, men!" it was Ruddiford's voice. He saw how sorely pressed was the girl, and a flush of anger and shame mantled his cheek. "Can't you see that you are hurting Nell?"

The loggers, awed and growling, fell back.

"Now then, Master Ross, you'll have to deal fair with Sam," began the girl. Several men climbed the fence and approached from the rear.

"We'll fix the anarchist!" was the cry.

Nell pushed Sam through the gate and latched it.

"Run!" she whispered to the parson's son.

"I am innocent——"

"Yes, yes, but the men are mad and they won't listen."

"Stop the villain!"

Again the slender form of the girl intervened. This gave Sam Dallard his opportunity and he improved it by darting toward the house. He did not enter but skirted the building and disappeared. Nell held the crowd at bay for perhaps three minutes—precious atoms of time!

At the end of this time a howling mob shot across the lawn in pursuit. In vain did Ross call to his men to desist. They were soon out of earshot, bent on doing something desperate.

"You are a coward, Ross Ruddiford!"

The words were red hot. Nell Contrad could cut with her ready tongue when she chose. And yet she and the young heir were friends in the main.

"How long since you have taken to this, Nell?" sneered Ross.

"Taken to what?"

"Defending a scamp who has proven by this night's work that he is worse than a murderer."

"I am not defending any such person."

"I say you are. Sam——"

"Ross Ruddiford, that boy isn't guilty of these awful things. There is some mistake, and you've got to give him a chance to prove it. These rough loggers would kill him. What but murder would that be, tell me, sir?"

Nell lifted her head till her white throat gleamed in the starlight, her eyes flashing like electric points. Her companion admired her in spite of his anger against the boy who had sought his ruin.

"That's all right, Nell," he said, "but the incendiary has been helped off by you. Now that is, in law, just as bad as doing the act itself. Can't you understand——"

"I don't wish to understand anything like that," retorted the girl.

She heard the shouts of the men behind the house and her heart stood still. Had they captured the fugitive? Ross thought so as he vaulted the fence and started on a run toward the house.

Nell flew up the walk. A man stood on the broad piazza and hailed the flying girl. It was her father, who had not entered the house, but stood, still in his wet garments, watching the angry millmen and loggers. He saw them scurry across the lawn like hounds in pursuit of a fox and grew angry at the scene.

"Stop, daughter!" he commanded.

She knew better than to disregard a father's command.

"Come up here to me," he ordered, and she obeyed, standing with one arm twined about a pillar of the porch.

"Where's your mother?"

"Abed and asleep long ago, papa."

"Where you ought to be, silly child."

His resentment was weakening.

"But, papa——"

"No excuse, child. I am ashamed of you. What will folks think to hear of Nellie Contrad out after midnight scolding a crowd of mill hands like a common washerwoman?"

"But, papa, there's a reason——"

"No there isn't. Go to your room and let me hear no more out of your head tonight. Do you hear me, Nell?"

"Yes, papa."

The girl moved across the porch just as a form came around the house and confronted them.

"That you, Cool?"

"Yes," said the foreman. "What are you after now, Dick Dingle?"

"I wish to go in. Where's Ross?"

The boy limped up the steps and leaned against the post lately occupied by Nell. Dick was breathing hard.

"I can't tell you," responded the foreman. "He's somewhere with that pack of fools, chasing a boy as if he was a murderer. Sam Dallard may be that, but I won't believe it. I'm no friend of mob law, which isn't law but anarchy. Have they caught the poor chap, Dicky?"

"No. He dodged through an open window and we can't find him. That's why I came around this way."

"Well, he isn't here, so you may as well go home, lad. What's the use making such a fuss over that boy——"

"I'll tell you," broke in Dick excitedly, "it's for what he did tonight—blowed up the pier-house and me with it. It ain't through any fault of his that I ain't dead and mangled in the river. Oh, I tell you—"

"Wait a minute, Dick."

"Eh?"

"Don't jump at conclusions, my lad," said the foreman in a mild yet rebuking voice. "There is some mistake——"

"There can't be any. I saw Sam myself, and so did Bob. I'm going in here after the rapscallion."

And yet this boy, Dick, had befriended Sam at the outset. His fierce enmity now was inexplicable.

"You can't go in, boy," and Mr. Contrad placed himself before the door.

"I've Ross' permission."

"But I am master here for another two years, sonny. Go about your business or I'll have you jerked for an intolerable nuisance. Understand?"

"Yes," said Dick, "I understand. Of course I can't go in if you refuse to let me."

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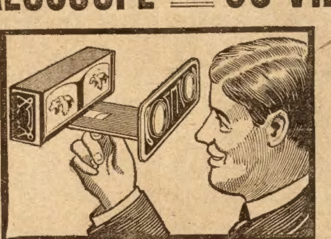

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The speaker turned about and sprang to the ground.

When Nell saw how Dick had been baffled she entered the house followed by her father. She pretended to go to her room. She went to another part of the house soon after, however. When all was silent within, the girl made her way to the kitchen and threaded her way down a long stair to the basement.

Nell had heard all that passed between her father and Dick Dingle.

So Sam Dallard had escaped his pursuers by seeking refuge in the house of his enemy. Nell was resolved to aid Sam to the best of her ability.

In good truth Nell and Sam were excellent friends. The parson's son had been good to her at school, showing her over the hard places in algebra, and assisting her in many ways. She liked tall Sam despite the sudden enmity that had been aroused against him.

"Ross is downright mean to let his men act so," declared Nell. "I don't see why——"

A sound in the cellar cut short her words. She was on the cement floor now, facing the outer wall. A human form had just crawled through a narrow window and hung feet down against the masonry.

The shoes of the intruder dangled ten feet from the floor. The basement under this portion of the house was very deep. A fall from the top of the high wall meant limbs or neck.

Of course the intruder was Sam.

After one breathless moment Nell ran for a step-ladder which occupied a nearby corner. She hastened to the wall and placed it under the dangling feet of the fugitive.

"Place your feet on that, Sam," cried the girl. "It's perfectly safe."

The boy did as directed. It was very dark in the cellar. Soon the lad was safely at the bottom. He leaned against the wall.

"Are you hurt, Sam?" asked Nell solicitously.

"N—oo, not much."

Another instant and the adventurous fellow had his arms about the girl's neck. He gave her a hearty smack, then asked:

"Is Sam down here, Nell? I want to see the rascal!"

The speaker was Dick Dingle!

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The Garrison Traitor.

(Continued from page eleven.)

master's store-house. When it was subdued, Bannister was gone. Investigation showed that the blaze was incendiary, started by a close friend of the prisoner. In the confusion, and by knocking a sentry unconscious, he managed to free Bannister. They fled together, and neither was found.

The garrison traitor had had his day. Little remained to remind anybody of him. He was too small a figure in the daily life of the post. Other things were more interesting.

All was well with Lieutenants Walton and Orwell, married to the ladies of their choice. All was well with Troop D, serving with its former officers. All was sure to be well when Captain Gartley, Lieutenant Walton and Sergeant Flood led the way in a campaign.

The End.

The White Hand.

(Continued from page seven.)

hood since Fred vanished? Things happen here without whys."

"If Keeneyes were only here," muttered Jansen Moore, "he'd find a why to everything!"

"I am here," said Mr. Pump, frowning from professional jealousy, as if he had been a musician hearing another musician praised; "if there are any whys, I'll turn 'em up."

"Mr. Pump," said the storekeeper, "there must have been some object in stretching this wire, and rigging up that piece of goods. All that involves too much effort to be done without a reason."

"Without doubt," the detective agreed. "But it may have been done merely to baffle us."

"I don't think we could be baffled any more than we've been all along," returned Excellent T. Smith, who had begun to lose faith in Mr. Pump's astuteness.

"This message is not in vain," said the detective gravely. "It is intended to make our minds easy about those lost children. It states that Fred and Lena are safe."

"That may be done to throw us off the trail," Excellent T. Smith objected.

"Who's on the trail?" snapped Mr. Pump.

"Not you, I'll swear to that!" cried the merchant hotly.

Mr. Pump did not answer, but he cast a look upon the crowd that seemed to bid them wait and see what he should find out presently.

The look of greatness had little effect. All were discouraged and at that point of irritation over the accumulation of mysteries, that takes everything in ill part. The general impression had settled down upon men and women alike, that the extraordinary events now benumbing the intelligence of Carverton, would never be satisfactorily made clear.

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JOHNNY EATON'S NEW YEAR'S GIFT.

BY WALTER FENTON.

"Slap down every brake on this trip before you reach the sand-cut, boys, for the rail is bad this morning, and if you once get under full headway going down the Pocono Mountains, you'll have a runaway sure."

Thus spoke Johnny Eaton, the train-despatcher of the Pierce Coal Company's road, as he started out a train of ten loaded cars and a cab.

The cars had just come out of the mines, and the engine had run thence down a half-mile upon the road toward the coal-breaker, which was their destination. At this point the down grade became so steep that the locomotive was no longer needed. The remaining eight miles of the track ran down the side of the Pocono Mountain, and it was the steepest piece of grade ever seen on a railway in this country. Even in dry weather, with good rail, it was difficult to run slowly enough to keep the track, and today it was wet and rainy.

The railroad terminated in the "head-house" of the coal-breaker; it ran to what is called "the dump," which is the point where the coal is dumped into the huge iron-toothed rollers which crush and grind the coal into the different sizes required for market. Directly underneath these rollers is the screen-room, where from thirty to forty boys are employed in picking the slate from the broken coal, as it slides by them in long, shallow chutes.

Should the brakeman lose control over a train coming down the Pocono, and have a runaway, the cars—provided they kept to the track—would run over the dump and down upon the boys in the room below. Nothing could then save them from a fearful death. They would be crushed and mangled ere they could make their escape.

"All right, Johnny, we'll run her down O. K. if the brakes only hold," sang out Aleck Davis, one of the brakemen.

"Correct," said Buster Peck, the other "runner." "There can't be no train get away from us. We are the boys, you know, that can handle 'em."

"Well, be very careful, for here is little Miss Nellie, the superintendent's daughter, she will be your passenger going down," said Johnny, as he assisted a little ten-year-old, lady with blue eyes, yellow hair, and delicate complexion into the cab, which was the head car of the train.

The cab occupied this place instead of the rear for the reason that the passengers were occasionally carried in it, and if it had been placed at the rear it would have been next to the locomotive, which pushed instead of pulled the train. This would have been an unpleasant situation for the occupants of the cab by reason of the flying cinders and dust, for the cab was partially open.

"Up with the brakes, Buster," said Aleck, and he and his mate threw up the levers, and the train started down the mountainside. In a moment they were out of sight around a sharp curve near at hand. Johnny Eaton stood watching them until they disappeared from view, and for several moments afterward he gazed thoughtfully at the point where they had been lost to his sight. Then turning to Hughey, the engineer, who was about to board the locomotive to return up the mountain to the pine, he said:

"I wish I had not let them run down without the engine. I ought to have sent you with them, for the locomotive could have held them back. What if they should jump the track at White Oak Run? At that point, you know, the road runs over a deep canon, at the bottom of which a swift mountain stream tumbles and dashes among the rocks that form its bed. If they should run off there they would be dashed to pieces—and little Nellie on board, too! There are many other bad places, but that is the most dangerous of all. My God! if anything should happen to them! If any evil comes to the little girl entrusted to my care, I shall never forgive myself. I wish I could call them back now."

"You can't call them back; it's too late for that," said Hughey. "But I think I might overtake them yet with the engine. I have on a good head of steam, and I could just throw open the throttle and let her slide. It doesn't need steam though, down this road, for it is the steepest, roughest road ever made.

"Do you think you could overtake them before they reach the sand-cut just this side of White Oak Run? You know from there the road is about as steep as the side of a house," said Johnny anxiously.

"Yes, I think I could," answered Hughey.

"Then let her slide; but for Heaven's sake be as careful as you can," said Johnny, as he jumped upon the engine.

"I'll overtake them, or I'll run the engine plum into ——," exclaimed Hughey. "So shut your eyes and hang on, for you're a-going to go down the Pocono faster than you ever went in your life. Lightning sliding down a greased wire can't beat the time I'm goin' to make after I round that curve. Here, Pat Spellman, chuck the coal into the fire-box and let her sizzle."

"All right. The fire is red-hot and the steam gage registers, forty above regulation point. So let her went," said Pat, the boss fireman of the Pocono.

Away they went. They reached the curve of which the engineer had spoken, and rounded it. Here the road plunged straight down the mountainside, and a long stretch of it could be seen extending far ahead.

They strained their eyes in the distance, and caught sight of the train they were pursuing, but it was a long way in advance of them, and it was shooting down the track with lightning speed.

"Good Heaven! I did not dream they could have gone so far in so brief a time," said Johnny. "How they fly! Why don't they check their dangerous speed?"

"By thunder, Johnny, all the brakes in the world wouldn't slow them up the way they are going. They are running like a flash. As sure as you live, they have lost control of the train; the brakes wouldn't hold, and the train is running away! Yes, it's a runaway, and God help the little gal in the cab!"

"My God! it must be so! Oh, what will be little Nellie's fate? The boys may jump from the train and save themselves; but the little girl—oh, Hughey, are you going as fast as you can? We must—I tell you we must catch them, or she is lost! What will her mother say to me if her darling is brought home dead—that idolized child crushed into a shapeless mass. How could I meet her parents then? No, it shall not be!" said Johnny excitedly.

"I'm going as fast as the engine can run. How she bounds and jumps along the track. If we don't run off ourselves it will be a miracle to me. You can't save the gal, Johnny; the attempt is useless."

"I will save her, or lose my own life in trying," answered Johnny, springing to his feet with flashing eyes and resolute bearing. His lips were compressed with an expression of determination.

"We are gaining on them," said Pat Spellman. "I can see Aleck and Buster slamming down brake after brake, but it doesn't do much good."

"They have not deserted the train yet," said Johnny. "They are brave boys, and I am sure they will stick to the train until the last moment. Even should it not run off before, when it reaches the 'dump' in the breaker, it will run over it, and down among the slate-pickers. The cab will then be dashed to pieces, and little Nellie will be killed. Doubtless, too, many of the poor little fellows in the breaker will be crushed to death, and they are dear to their parents, although they are poor, as the delicate little lady to her rich father. No, Hughey, the only way to save little Nellie is to run up against the last car of the train ahead, and hook on to it. Then I'll jump upon the coal cars and run over them to the cab, and bring Nellie back to the engine. If you can reverse and stop the runaway train, you will, of course, do so. If you cannot, we can cut loose again at the last moment," said Johnny.

"Yes, that's the only way," said Hughey.

On, on, on rushed the flying locomotive, and now it is apparent to them all that they are rapidly gaining upon the runaway. "Toot! Toot! Toot-ott-ott-oot!" sounds the shrill shriek of the locomotive whistle giving the signal for down brakes. But every brake upon the cars of the runaway is already down, and yet their speed is not materially lessened. Aleck and Buster still cling to the flying cars, but they are ready to jump and save themselves if necessary. Self-preservation is nature's first law. None can blame them; for they have faithfully discharged their duty.

On, on again, and it seems as if the engine is falling through the air so rapid is its flight down the step side of Pocono. Now the distance between it and the runaway is but a few yards; in another minute the tender of the engine will strike the "bumpers" of the last car.

Pat Spellman stands ready to "hook on" the moment the two cars meet. Johnny stands at the side ready to assist him. Now with a crash the bumpers of the tender and the last car of the other train come together. Pat stoops down to drop in the hook—hooks are used on mine cars—when to his horror he sees that it is broken. Johnny makes the fearful discovery at the same moment, and he turns pale at the thought that all their efforts have been in vain. The engine and the runaway are now parting again, and already there is a space of several feet between them. Johnny measures the distance with his eye. Pat watches him, and like a flash there came to his mind the thought of what Johnny is about to attempt. He turns deadly pale; for he knows that if Johnny jumps and misses the last car of the other train, he leaps to certain death.

"Stop, oh, stop!" cries Pat in a terrified voice, as he sees Johnny gather himself up for the desperate leap.

He speaks too late, for at that instant Johnny bounds forward. Oh! will he alight upon the car, or will he fall upon the track, to be crushed and mangled out of all human semblance?

Pat holds his breath for the quarter of a second that Johnny is in mid-air. Hughey has seen the desperate venture, and his heart seems for a moment to stand still.

But he does not fall upon the track; like a bird, he alights upon the coal-car of the other train, and now he is running over the tops of the cars toward the cab. He reaches it, opens the door and disappears.

In a moment he is again making his way back toward the engine, and in his arms he carries little Nellie.

He reaches the last car; but now the engine is several yards behind. In spite of every effort the runaway has gained once more, and it is now entering the sand-cut. In another moment it will make the sharp turn at White Oak Run, and ten to one it will run off the track and be dashed in pieces.

For a moment Johnny hesitates; then, with Nellie in his arms he leaps from the train. He saves Nellie from serious injury. When he arises to his feet he finds that his arm is broken, and he is cut and bruised; but this to him is nothing, for Nellie is saved. A few moments later he hears the locomotive shrieking away in a continuous alarm signal. The engineer is trying to warn the employees in the coal-breaker that a runaway is coming down Pocono.

* * * * * * * *

Let us glance now into the screen-room of the "breaker." The thirty or forty boys there employed are seated upon their narrow benches, which are placed across the chutes. With bowed heads and bent bodies, these little children of toil—the white slaves of the coal regions—with eyes fixed upon the rapidly sliding coal, are diligently picking from it the slate and rock with which it is mingled when mined. The whir and buzz, the roar and rattle, of the powerful machinery about them drown all other sounds. The whistle of the approaching engine is unheard, unheeded, unless it is by one bright-eyed little fellow who is perched far up on what are called the "telegraphs." He pauses for a moment and straightens his tired, aching back, and leans against a beam to rest his overtasked muscles. He seems to be listening intently and he strains his eyes toward a window; but he can see nothing, for a blinding cloud of black, choking dust rolls down from the screens, and the deafening roar of the crushing and grinding coal only comes to his ears. Yet he fancies he did hear an alarm signal, and for an instant longer he listens, and the first faint sound of the alarm breaks upon his ear again. In another instant he will recognize the sound, and his warning voice will be raised to save his companions by shouting the alarm; but at that precise instant the "slate boss" caught sight of his drudge, and seeing that he was not at work, he brought his long, heavy whip down upon his shoulders with a stinging blow and shouted in his ears:

"Git to work, d—— you! What are you tarin' at? 'Tend to your work, you lazy kid, or I'll tan yer hide fur ye."

The blow and the reprimand diverted the boy's attention, and he did not hear the whistle.

Nearer, nearer the flying runaway train is coming; rapidly it is rushing toward the "dump," and in a few moments it must come crashing into the screens. No human power can now avert that catastrophe, and it seems as though no human power can save those poor little toilers in the screen-room. Must they be crushed to death there? Must those innocent souls be hurled into eternity? Must life end for them ere it is well begun?

* * * * * * *

George Eaton—"Genial George"—the superintendent of the colliery, is in the weigh office, down upon the branch road of the D., L. and W. Railway. This office is about fifty yards from the coal-breaker. George is reading the Scranton Truth, and is engrossed in one of John E. Barrett's charming poems. Tom Hammond, the coal inspector, is smoking his big pipe, and is far away with "Sleaford's Joanna." Suddenly he flings down the paper and rushes toward the door, and throws it open. George springs to his feet, and is at his side in a moment, and they both distinctly hear the wild, thrilling shriek of the alarm, and glancing in the direction whence the sound comes, they see the runaway train rushing toward the breaker; it is very near at hand.

"My God!" cried George, "the boys! the boys in the screen-room will be killed!" and he bounds away toward the breaker.

He strains every nerve, and flees over the intervening space with incredible speed. He reaches the door that leads to the screen-room, but before he enters that room he must first ascend a short flight of stairs.

As he opens the door at the foot of these stairs he glances back at the coming train. It is thundering down upon the "dump," and in another moment it must reach it.

"Oh, that I may be in time to save the boys!" he prays.

Then with two desperate bounds he ascends the stairs, and bursts into the screen-room. In clarion tones he shouts:

"Run for your lives!—a runaway is coming down the Pocono!"

His voice was heard above the din, and in an instant the boys were rushing from that place of awful danger. George had reached them none too soon, for the last boy was hardly out of the screen-room when the runaway train came crashing into it.

Aleck and Buster jumped off just before the train went over the "dump," and they were uninjured.

"A close shave," said Buster.

"I should say it was," said Aleck calmly.

A few hours later Johnny Eaton restored little Nellie to the arms of her mother, and as the lady embraced her darling, who had been so near death, she thanked Johnny warmly and earnestly praised his bravery, but Johnny turned modestly away and answered:

"I have given you little Nellie's life; she is my New Year's gift."

Coming to an Agreement.

"Sir," began a youthful suitor, "I shall occupy only a few moments of your time. I have come to ask you for your daughter. I——"

"Young man," said the father, "do you——"

"Yes, sir, I realize fully that she has been tenderly nurtured and is very dear to you, also that her home is one affording every luxury. But she is willing to leave it."

"Can you——"

"No, sir, I cannot maintain her in the style to which she has been accustomed, but I have a good salary and am ready to chance it. So is she."

"Will you——"

"Yes, sir, I will insure my life for a sum sufficient to provide for her if I should be taken away."

"Would you——"

"No, sir, I should not expect to live with the family. I am able to buy and furnish a modest home for her."

"Young man," said the parent, looking at his watch, "I rather like your style. You can have her. Good——"

"Morning, sir!"

Things Worth Knowing.

"It's queer how little most people know about little things," said a quarrelsome man not long since. "Some day I am going to start a school where only the minutiae of life will be taught—how to button the coat when you put it on, and how to brush a hat, and so on.

"Not one in a hundred persons know it is a mistake to button the bottom of a coat first. The top button should be the first on, otherwise the shape of the coat, even if it is carefully tailored, is seriously affected. This little pointer alone would save many persons a lot of money.

"A hat should always be brushed in the direction opposite to the hands of a clock. Otherwise the pile of the felt is taken out and the hat given a cheap, poor appearance. Of course, with straw this does not apply.

"In the care of paste, too, it is odd how little is known by most people. The best way to buy paste nowadays is in the water-well jars put up by all large manufacturers. Then when such a jar is gotten keep the well always half full of water. If paste becomes hard, too, from lack of use stir it with a stick until it has proper consistency. If obdurate add a little water. If still obdurate add a little glycerin and water. This will put it in good condition.

"Altogether, if people only knew more about the little things of life and less of the pretentious and immaterial ones, it would be a far happier place to live in—this world we have down here."

The Historian's Hens.

An Indiana man tells of the efforts of an author belonging to the Hoosier school of historical novelist to put in his leisure time as a "hen farmer" in that State. The literary person's venture afforded his agricultural neighbors no end of amusement.

During the first year the amateur farmer discovered that all his little chickens, which were confined in coops, were languishing at the point of death. The novelist went over his "hen literature" to locate the cause of the trouble, but to no avail.

Finally he called upon an old chap named Rawlins, to whom he put the question:

"What do you suppose is the matter with those chickens?"

"Well, I dunno," said Rawlins. "What do you feed 'em?"

"Feed them!" exclaimed the novelist-farmer. "Why, I don't feed them anything!"

"Then, how'd you s'pose they was a-goin' to live?"

"I presumed," replied the literary person, "that the old hens had milk enough for them now."

It Was a Success.

"Sir," said the man as he entered the office, "I wish to exhibit to you my universal calculating machine—a thing that should be found in the countingroom of every business man. It will add, subtract, divide and multiply, and there is no such thing as failure."

"I have heard of it," replied the merchant, "but I never understood it was much of a success."

"O, sir, but it is perfection! Give me any example you will, and I will guarantee a correct solution."

"Very well. I bought two dozen leghorn chickens at $3 each. I built a coop at an expense of $30. In one year I bought $25 worth of feed. In the same year I got six eggs. What was my profit or loss for the year?"

"Why you paid out $127 and got back about 20 cents. In actual figures, your loss was $126.80."

"I guess that's correct," sighed the merchant, "and you may leave me two machines. I'll keep one busy on my chickens and the other figuring out how much profit I make in raising my own celery and cucumbers."

Not Altogether Bad.

A policeman saw a man acting rather suspiciously near a jewelry store one evening, so, going over to him, he demanded to know who the man was and what he wanted.

"I'm thinking of opening a jewelry store in this neighborhood," replied the man, "and I'm watching to see if there is much trade." Whereupon the policeman went on his way, satisfied.

Next morning word was received at the station house that the jewelry store had been entered and robbed during the night. The policeman who had accosted the mysterious stranger said reflectively, "He may be a thafe, but he's no liar!"

There is usually a woman in the case, and too often she is the wrong one.

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The guimpe can be made with either elbow or three-quarter sleeves.

5813 Girl's Coat, 8 to 14 Years.
Long loose coats make most becoming wraps for growing girls and are to be noted in a variety of attractive colors and materials.

5796 Misses' Cutaway Coat, 14 and 16 Years.
Unquestionably cutaway coats are favorites of the season and many exceedingly smart variations are shown.

5793 Child's Coat with Shield, 2 to 6 Years.
The long coat, that covers the frock, is the favorite for little children and is worn in cloth of all colors, in velvet, velveteen, corduroy and cheviot.

5846 Boy's Shirt Waist, 4 to 12 Years.
To be made with attached roll-over or separate high collar.

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There is no suit that the small boy wears that pleases him better than this one which is masculine enough to satisfy his ambitions while it is childish enough to please his mamma.

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To be made in round or walking length, with inverted plaits or habit back

5828 Seven Gored Skirt, 22 to 32 Waist.
The plain gored flared skirt is always a graceful and becoming one and this season will have extended vogue.

5792 Nine Gored Skirt with Panels, 22 to 30 Waist.
The skirt that is made with panels is a favorite among the latest models and has much to commend it.

5816 Seven Gored Skirt, 22 to 30 Waist.
It is eminently graceful, takes long and beautiful lines and can be trimmed to give the tunic, or shawl, suggestion very easily and readily.

5825 Semi-Fitted Coat, 34 to 42 Bust.
The semi-fitted coat is always a becoming and satisfactory one.

5797 Princess Gown, 32 to 40 Bust.
To be made in round or walking length. The princess gown always is a graceful and attractive one and just now it is high in favor with la mode.

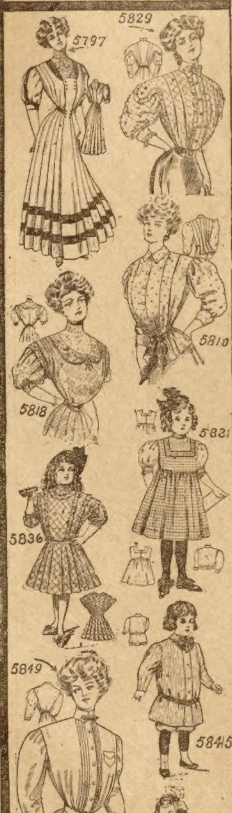
5810 Box Plaited House Jacket, 32 to 42 Bust.
To be made with three-quarter or long sleeves. Simple house jackets are always in demand for they fill a definite, practical need.

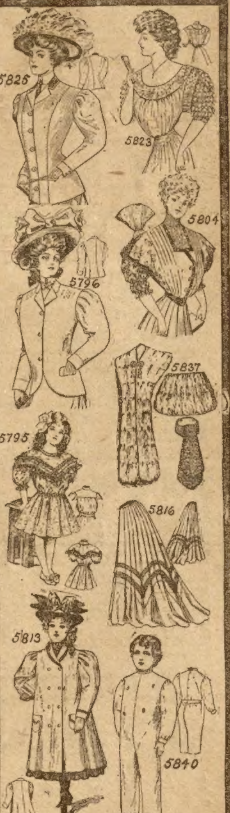
5818 Over Blouse or Jumper, 32 to 40 Bust.
The over blouse is made in one piece and is tucked over the shoulders the sleeves being cut in one with it.

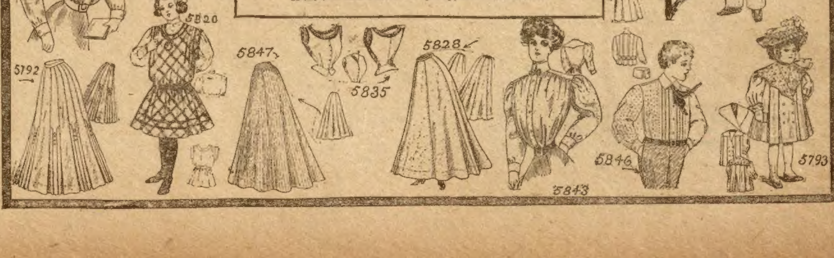
5843 Blouse or Shirt Waist, 32 to 42 Bust.
To be made with or without the yoke at back. The plain tailored shirt waist is always needed.

5804 Over Blouse or Jumper, 32 to 40 Bust.
Each new variation of the over blouse seems a bit more attractive than the last and each one is certain to find a place in the wardrobe.

5829 Blouse with Bretelles, 32 to 40 Bust.
To be made with three-quarter or full length sleeves. No prettier variety of the ever useful blouse has yet appeared than this one.







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This is a very old amusement, but only those who have tried it know how much melody may lurk in a glass of water. If you have eight thin tumblers of the same size and shape you may make a musical scale quite easily. Each tumbler contains a certain amount of cold water, more or less, according to the volume of sound required; this you may find out practically by dipping your finger in the water and drawing it briskly around the sharp outer rim of the glass. This produces a musical note.

The fuller the glass the deeper the note. The swift motion of the finger around the edge produces a vibration on the surface of the water, particularly if the edge is thin and clean cut.

The glasses with graduated amounts of water, might be placed in regular scale order on a table covered with both cloth and table felt. At each glass put a performer with a good ear for music and a steady middle finger, which is the best and strongest for use. Each glass must be held firmly, quite near the bottom so as not to mar the sound, with the forefinger and thumb of the left hand. In this way all familiar airs may be produced with some really sweet vibrations if you know how to use your finger to the best advantage.

Conundrums.

Why are hens like writers?

They scratch for a living.

When are arguments like little girls' frocks?

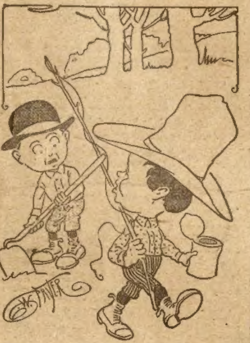
When cut short.

Where are invisible spirits always to be found?

In casks in wine cellars.

When is a cracker like a guest of honor at a banquet?

When toasted.



The Angler—Did you tell yer pa that the fish was bitin' today?

His Friend—Yep; an' he said fer me to stay in the pertater patch an' they wouldn't bite me.

Too Much Boy.

Out of 150 boy books on the market and being sold every day, at least 100 have the boy hero leave for New York, Boston or Chicago. He has a hard time for a couple of weeks, and then finds a rich man to adopt him and comes out of the big end of the horn.

Boys who read these books should remember that they are written to sell. Boys who come to the big cities to make their fortune will bring up in the police station far sooner than in the home of a millionaire.

No boy can do what these heroes are made to do. There is altogether too much boy and too little sense about the yarns. Boys are being picked up by the police every day who have read these books and started out to have adventures and wind up with making a million dollars.

Let Acorns Alone.

A boy may enter upon the Government lands of France and pick any wild fruits he may find, and he can gather all kinds of berries and nuts he may come across, but if he gathers so much as one single acorn he can be fined and sent to jail.

The peasants of France roast the acorns and grind them and mix them with flour, and they like the bread far better than if flour alone was used. They buy the privilege of gathering from the Government, and woe to the boy who sneaks into the woods and fills his pockets. He is considered to have committed a more serious crime than if he had stolen a calf.

The Reason.

Visitor—How is it that you are always such a good little boy, Harold?

Harold—Because I am always put to bed when I am naughty.

Asleep Inside a Flower.

Have you ever wondered how the poor flies keep warm and dry on a wet summer's day, when the rain has been simply pelting down for hours, and you begin to feel that it's never, never going to be fine again.

Flies haven't got umbrellas and mackintoshes and houses and beds like we have, but they are rather wise insects in their choice of a shelter, and many of them choose the inside of flowers as beds.

The queer bladder-like flowers of the campion are one of the flies' favorite shelters.

Next time you are having a country ramble look out for this plant, and if you come across it, open some of the blossoms; very likely you will find that they are the home of several black flies that have crept into them for warmth and rest.

The Other Man's Dog.

It is a remarkable fact that when a man owns a dog, it is gifted with all the virtues and has an admirable superiority, in blood, breeding and native intelligence. If his dog bites any one, it "served 'im right; he shouldn't 'a been passing at that unreasonable hour"—four in the afternoon, perhaps; or, the dog, being a sagacious animal, knew that the person attacked was bent upon some evil errand—though he had lived respectably for some thirty-five years. If, however, man number two has a dog, and the two dogs fight, or man number one gets bitten by dog number two, why, what a low, mangy, mongrel cur is the other man's dog. What a vicious, spiteful, unmannerly, ill-taught beast he is, without sense enough to distinguish between ham-bone and a neighbor's leg.

The Boy Who Throws.

The boy is considered a nuisance in Bohemia more than elsewhere in the world. There is a general law to prevent him from doing almost anything in which there is any fun. All the butter is churned by a power that is run by a sheep.

One of the laws is that any boy that throws a stone and hits a dog must work this churn-power until twenty pounds of butter has been churned. If he happens to be lame and can't use his legs to do it, he must hire some one else or go to jail for three days.

If any law should try to stop an American boy from throwing at a stray dog, and hitting him, too, he would rise up and fight the battle of Bunker Hill over again. Throwing stones is one of his privileges.

Good for the Horse.

In Nottingham, Eng., a few weeks ago, a teamster loaded his wagon so heavily that the horses could not start it. He began lashing them and swearing and a crowd gathered, but no one would take a lift at the wheels and help the horses get a move on the wagon. The driver was still lashing away when a grocer's horse standing across the road rushed at him with open mouth and seized him by the arm and bit him so savagely that he had to go to the hospital for treatment.

If the horses would stand by each other this way there would soon be an end to the cruelties seen every day in the cities. The man who lashes a horse because the horse can do no more than he can, deserves a sentence to jail every time.

A Strong Boy.

Four weeks ago in a village a few miles from Mexico City a citizen went to the alcalde and complained that a boy 10 years old had stolen and carried away his donkey. He insisted that the boy had carried the animal on his shoulder. The police laughed at the idea, but when the lad was arrested it was shown that the statement was true.

The boy had carried a good-sized donkey a quarter of a mile on his shoulder without a stop. He did the trick again for the benefit of the police.

Various tests were made of his strength, and it was found that he had the muscle of two ordinary men. He is in jail now, but when he comes out the people will have to look out that he don't carry off their houses some night.

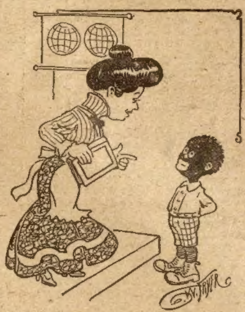
To Make a Magnet.

Borrow or buy an ordinary bar magnet or a horseshoe magnet, the first named being the preferable shape. Take a knitting needle or any piece of tolerably hard steel and with one pole of the magnet rub it from end to end.

Repeat this process several times, being careful to bring the magnet back without touching the needle to the end from which you started—in other words, the rubbing must be in one direction only. If a horseshoe magnet be employed, start from the middle of the knitting needle, pass the magnet along to either end, and then bring it through the air to the other end and stroke the needle several times, finishing in the middle.

Sick Gems.

A well known jeweler makes a specialty of curing sick and sulky gems. All jewels, except diamonds, he says, are liable to maladies. Rubies, sapphires and pearls have their particular ailments, but diamonds are never sick, owing to their great hardness. The general cure is the application of acids, but it requires an expert to carry it out.



Teacher—Give me a sentence with the word delight in it.

Pupil—De wind blew in de window and blew out de light.

He Just Threw.

A boy working in a garden in the village of Grafton, Ohio, saw a dog passing along the street and, of course, he picked up a stone and took a throw. The stone hit the dog, and the canine ran under the feet of a team of horses. The horses ran away and dashed into the front of a store.

A man in getting out of their way fell and broke his leg. A man and a woman in the store were badly hurt. The damage to the store was $100. One horse was killed and the wagon smashed, and that counted up $200 more.

It's fun to throw at a dog and see him get a hump on himself, but sometimes the thing doesn't end with a laugh. In this case the boy who did the throwing is in jail and wishing he hadn't done it.

Amusing Little Arabs.

Travelers who pass through the province of Constantine are often surprised by a company of Arab boys who dash out from somewhere and, after turning a few handsprings by way of practice, stand upon their hands and heads in a long line.

The one who wins this strange contest, by standing the longest on his head, advances toward the travelers for a reward.

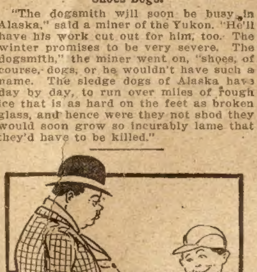
One who watched the party for some time found that the travelers were fooled into believing it a real contest, inasmuch as it is always agreed beforehand which boy shall win. In this way the spoils are more evenly divided.

The Origin of Santa Claus.

Not only is Santa Claus not a Christmas figure, but even his name is false. The name originally was Saint Nicholas, of which Santa Claus is the abbreviated form. Claus being the "petty" name for Nicholas in Germany. By this name was originally understood the holy bishop of Bari in Italy, who was born at the end of the third century and was renowned for his works of mercy toward the poor and suffering. His memory is celebrated in the Catholic Church on Dec. 6, and from olden times the people in Catholic countries have observed that day by making presents to good children.

Shoes Dogs.

"The dogsmith will soon be busy in Alaska," said a miner of the Yukon. "He'll have his work cut out for him, too. The winter promises to be very severe. The dogsmith," the miner went on, "shoes, of course, dogs, or he wouldn't have such a name. The sledge dogs of Alaska have day by day, to run over miles of rough ice that is as hard on the feet as broken glass, and hence were they not shod they would soon grow so incurably lame that they'd have to be killed."



"No, I don't need no shine."

"How do you know? I bet you ain't seen your feet in years!"